THE

KUZZILBASH.

A TALE OF KHORASAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

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ADVENTURES

OF A

KUZZILBASH.

CHAPTER I.

THE DISCIPLINE OF NADER.

Many months were occupied in reducing the northern and eastern parts of the province to a safe and settled state, but during all that time his Highness never lost sight of his greater and more important objects. The strength of the army was increased, and the details of its regulations and discipline were more completely organized, while the constant employment of its different divisions against rebellious governors or refractory tribes, kept alive the courage of the soldiers, and inured them to war and fatigue.

The power of Nader's mind was no less conspi-

cuous in these details than in schemes of more extended policy; never was any man more qualified by nature for a general. The striking influence he possessed over the minds of the soldiery was a peculiar attribute of his person, which he increased and maintained by a careful attention to their wants, and an indulgence, which, however, was never permitted to interfere with the strictness of his discipline. Woe to the purveyors whose division should be found ill-supplied with food upon a march!—well might they tremble when cited before the General by the complaints of their officers, for he never forgave wilful inattention or neglect; even a reasonable excuse would not always content him. His maxim was, that soldiers cannot do their duty without food, and must be supplied, cost what it may. A complaint of this nature was lodged on one occasion against two persons whom he had directed to collect a store of grain from certain villages between Subzawar and Jahjerm,* and who, by failing in their duty, had subjected the detachment for which it was intended, to the risk of a miscarriage. The men assured his Highness that the fault lay not with them, but with the Ketkhodahs, who refused to furnish the grain, and who, when threatened with his Highness's displeasure, beat them and drove

* Two towns of Khorasan.

them away from their gates. "They did not beat you half enough," coolly replied Nader, "but I will make up for their deficiency." They were seized, and their feet beat to a jelly; and Nader, while they were roaring with pain, turned to some of those about him and observed, "There is no listening to such ghorunsaugs! These fellows, now, thought I would punish the Ketkhodahs!—the fools! they know they can have whatever assistance they want to enforce my orders, and yet they think thus to laugh at my beard! At this rate I should have all my purveyors taking bribes from the Ketkhodahs, and getting their own necks out of the scrape, while these wretches would be left to answer for themselves to me."—We had no more complaints of that kind during the campaign.

Even when it was obvious that a failure had been inevitable from the force of circumstances, and when the explanations brought forward were evidently founded in truth, he sometimes would not be satisfied. "The soldier must feel himself protected," would he say, "or how can I look for his confidence? he does not reason, he only feels that hunger must be satisfied, or that he cannot do his duty; and if we cannot get him food, we must pacify him by punishing those whom he believes to be in fault." Thus he would sometimes punish a purveyor for a failure which he could not help,

and send him the next day a present, or a khelut, by way of amends.

But notwithstanding his well-known strictness in these matters, persons were sometimes found so insane as to add the crime of peculation to neglect of duty, and seek to enjoy their own gratifications at the public expense, while those whose comfort was placed in their charge were suffering absolute want. When such cases came under his cognizance, his fury was uncontrollable, and the punishments he inflicted on the offenders were terrible. I remember on one occasion his unexpectedly joining a division of the army which in general was attached to the camp of the Shah, and finding that the soldiers were ill-supplied with grain, and forced to purchase wholesome food at an extravagant rate. The persons whose duty it was to supply the bazaar were immediately sent for, and while themselves were undergoing a strict examination, their dwellings were searched with equal severity: the stores of grain and choice food of different descriptions found there, sufficiently declared that, however neglectful of the soldiers' comfort, they had amply provided for their own. The trembling wretches attempted to excuse themselves, but were sternly stopped by the General. "By the head of the Prophet! I wonder not that the enemies of the King should prosper, and rebels abound, when the soldiers of the state are starved

by vermin like you, who fatten on the meat they should eat; but I will teach you and the like of you, to feed upon pillaw and kubaubs, while my soldiers are in want even of bread and sour milk!" He issued his orders; the stores of the miserable wretches were distributed among the soldiers, and they themselves, bound hand and foot, were thrust into a small apartment, the door of which was then built up with brick and mortar. No one dared to expostulate, nor did any one venture to approach the place for ten days, when it was opened by order of the General, and disclosed a horrid spectacle. One of the poor creatures had died before the rest, and the other two had endeavoured to assuage the pangs of hunger by feeding on his body. No contractor was willing to come forward after this; but Nader appointed such persons as he thought fit for the office, and I need not add that no money was made by them, and that corn was afterwards as cheap in this camp as in any part of the country.

He could not endure to see even his officers enjoying themselves in plenty, when the soldiers were in want. I have heard him abuse, in the grossest terms, a party whom he found after a hard march rejoicing in the prospect of a hearty meal upon a sheep they had found means to secure, while their followers had not bread. He upbraided them with selfishness and neglect of duty,

in taking their ease while their men were unprovided for;—nay he forced them to give up their spoil to satisfy the cravings of the hungry soldiers. I remember him putting a certain Mimbashee into confinement without food for the night, after a severe day's duty, for a similar offence:—it is true he sent him a suit of chain armour and a fine Herāt scymetar the next day, with a hint to look more carefully after the comforts of his men for the future; for the man was a brave officer, and in no small favour, in spite of the lesson which his Highness thought fit thus to give him.

In truth, the General never required of others more than he did himself. Often has he divided the last maun* of bread in his family, with those of his soldiers who could not otherwise be served; and in times of scarcity he never would admit of a distinction in favour of himself or his household, but received for them and for himself the same allowance that was served out to the soldiers, making a meal himself upon a few handfuls of parched peas. This solicitude for the comfort of the troops, which was extended to insuring them a corresponding regularity in the issue of pay, clothing, and other accommodations, won for him their confidence and affection, and enabled him to maintain that strictness of discipline which had for many years been unknown among the armies of Persia.

* A measure of 7¼lbs. English weight.

But, however tenacious on the score of discipline, there were times when Nader cared but little how far the soldiers carried their excesses in plunder or rapine. When they were marching through the territory of a rebel or an enemy, or when a town had been taken by storm, all was usually considered as fair game, and the soldier was called but slightly to account for his conduct, provided he was found at his post when duty required it. Nevertheless, when it was his pleasure to command that all deeds of violence should be abstained from, and that the troops should proceed in peace and good order, woe to the man who was found trespassing in any point! His punishments, upon such occasions, were severe in proportion to his usual indulgence.

A Gholaum in no small favour with the General had sallied forth upon a foraging party in the friendly district of Nishapore, which it was the policy as well as the wish of Nader to conciliate, and laid hold of two goats, the only property of a poor peasant; who, on remonstrating and attempting to recover his beasts, received a severe beating into the bargain, from the thief and his myrmidons. It happened, that when the poor wretch came to make his complaint, the Gholaum who had ill-used him was on duty, and knowing his errand, denied him access to the tent of his Highness: but the man persevered, and made so loud a noise as to

attract the notice of the General, who, enquiring into the matter, ordered him to be brought near. He related his story, and proved it to be true in spite of the positive denials of the Gholaum. "Son!" said Nader, "I presume from the nature of your conduct that you are tired of my service; I shall therefore promote you according to your deserts into that of another. Here, fellow," continued he, addressing the peasant, "here is a slave for thee; I give him to thee in lieu of thy two goats; see that he works out their value to thee: if he gets out of thy clutches without ample payment, thou art a fool." The man, not comprehending the General's meaning, believed that his suit was rejected, that his Highness was only making game of him, and he was withdrawing in sorrow and confusion; but he was soon made sensible of his mistake, and left the presence carrying with him his new slave, with whom he readily agreed for a ransom of thirty tomauns, to be paid by the sale of all he had. When Nader heard of the arrangement, he sent again for the parties. "Well, friend, are you content?"—"May your Highness's prosperity increase! I have every reason to be so." "Well; you have let him off cheaply—you may go your ways:—though you may be satisfied, I am not." The culprit, who, unhappy wretch! expected after this exhibition of justice to be restored to favour, was now brought

forward,—his infraction of discipline was yet to be atoned for; and accordingly, after receiving a severe bastinado in full view of the troops, his ears were ordered to be cut off, and himself turned out of camp, as a warning to all such illicit plunderers.

Courage and enterprize were the qualities which alone could disarm the wrath of Nader when excited by such misdemeanours: and though these could not at all times induce him to forgive a breach of discipline, they certainly pleaded with him powerfully in favour of their possessors; as, on the other hand, a sneaking and unmanly behaviour tended to exasperate him. I remember an instance in point, which may be worth relating. There was a certain person, an Affshar of his own tribe, who had risen by his own valour and merit from the station of a common groom to be a Dehbashee* in Nader's guard. In a hot engagement with the Toorkomans, a Dehbashee, who, as is customary in some corps, carried a small flag on the point of his spear, happened to be killed, and his men, overpowered by numbers, were retreating, leaving this banner in the hands of their enemies. This person, at that time a common soldier, calling out to his comrades to stand firm, rushed alone against the advancing Toorkomans, and made such good use of his sword, that he not only

* Commander of ten men.

forced them to give back, and gave time for his own friends to rally and come on, but he recovered the flag, and bore it off in triumph; and Nader, pleased with his zeal and courage, immediately gave him a right to carry the trophy he had so gallantly won.

This man, accompanied by a few soldiers, was sent by his Highness to receive the contribution of a certain village, with strict orders to communicate with no one but the Ketkhodah, and not to remain in the place longer than might be required for the performance of his errand. Unhappily for himself, the Dehbashee was not insensible to the comforts of good cheer, and liked good wine better than a pious Mussulmaun should do. The Ketkhodah, in hopes of contriving to relieve himself of a part of the contribution, prevailed on the officer to wait and partake of a good lamb pillaw, while the money and other articles should be collected; but the latter, not choosing to expose his trespass to the eyes of his men, sent them to wait his arrival at a certain place, where he promised soon to join them. The pillaw was excellent: a merry fellow, one of the villagers, dropped in, with one or two more, and told some capital stories; and their host, closing the doors with mysterious caution, produced a large carboy of excellent Nishapore wine. Whether the Dehbashee was more than commonly thirsty, or the wine more than usually po-

tent, or whether the Ketkhodah had drugged it for the purpose, was never discovered; but the former soon lost his senses, and did not recover them until the morning of the next day, when he had some difficulty in recollecting where he was, and what his errand had been.

The Ketkhodah now found little difficulty in making his own terms; for the Dehbashee was confused, ashamed, and, in some degree, in his power. His despair was completed, when, on reaching the place of appointment, he found none of his party there. They had remained, as desired, until late at night, when, confounded at the protracted absence of their chief, and supposing that he must have missed his way in the darkness, they returned to head-quarters, where they were still more astonished to find he had not yet arrived.

After musing for a while, the poor fellow resolved to go at once to the General, and tell him the whole affair without attempting any excuse. "Let him do what he will with me," said he mentally; "it is better than skulking or telling a lie about it, or than being at the mercy of a knave like the Ketkhodah." So to his Highness he went, and found him in bad humour enough; for the fact of his absence, and the arrival of his men without their officer had just been reported. "How!—does the fellow dare to appear in our presence?" growled Nader, with a terrible frown; "take

him and bastinado him soundly, and strip him of his armour, and turn him out of camp."—"Very good, your Highness," replied the man; "but you may as well listen to your slave's report, and take the money he has brought from the village; the grain and other things have already been delivered."—"Say on, fellow," replied Nader; "but, if you prevaricate in the smallest degree, it shall be worse for you."—"Your slave is a plain man," said the Dehbashee, "and will tell the truth exactly: do with him afterwards as may seem good to your Highness." He told his tale; its simplicity sufficiently vouched for its correctness, and the gloom on the General's visage diminished. "Well, you great drunken fool! and so my orders are to be disobeyed, your duty neglected, and the public service to go to the devil, that you may stuff that hide of yours with lamb pillaw and wine! How is discipline to be maintained at this rate? You cannot be pardoned, nor can I trust you any longer."—"Your slave did not expect to be pardoned; but he never thought of leaving your Highness's service. Had I been content to do so, and thought but of saving myself, I needed not to have returned to your presence. I had a good horse, and money enough; my arm and my sword would always have won me service; nor was I far from the frontier, which once passed I was safe enough. All this was in my power on the one hand, and punishment in view upon the other, if I

remained; yet I returned to the feet of your Highness. Of my trustworthiness your Highness can judge, by recollecting how often I have neglected my duty; and when you want a stout arm to strike a strong blow, perhaps you may remember Assad Allee Mehtur."* With these words he turned, and nodding to the Nassukchee near him, said, "Come on! I am ready."

"Hear that ghorumsaug now," said Nader, with a half-pleased, half-sarcastic laugh; "he thinks we cannot win a battle without his help! After all, the rascal is a good soldier. Hark! you, Assad Allee; you have forgotten your duty, disobeyed orders, and neglected the public service: were you my own brother, so flagrant a breach of discipline should not go unpunished: but you shall not want an opportunity to redeem your character. Before long, Insh-allah! we shall come to blows with these accursed Koords—may their fathers roast in hell!—let me then see you bear yourself as you once did, and we shall try what can be done for you—till then you are deprived of your office as Dehbashee:—go!"

The promised opportunity was soon obtained, and Assad Allee was not the man to neglect it. When the engagement began, he rode up to his Highness, and kept his eye upon him. A furious charge was made upon the left by a well-mounted and chosen body of Koords. "Now is your time,"

* *Mehtur*, signifies a groom.

exclaimed Nader, pointing to the breach which they had made in our line—"Bero!*—there is your chance!"—"Be-Chushm!" answered Assad Allee, and clapping stirrups to his horse's flanks, and shouting aloud, he dashed among the assailants. His strength and impetuosity produced an immediate effect: the foremost of the Koords, already checked in their career by the resistance they had met with at first, were overthrown with violence, and their fall embarrassed those behind; the line recovered from their momentary confusion, and Assad Allee succeeded in securing two heads at his saddle-bow.

He had cut down a third from his horse, and was endeavouring to make sure of this additional trophy, when the Koords rallying in their turn, closed their ranks around him, and shut him out from view of his companions. Every one now believed him to be lost, and even Nader, who had kept his eye upon him, was hastily roaring out to spur to his assistance, when the throng of Koords once more opened out, and Assad Allee galloped through the gap, cutting furiously to the right and left, in possession of his three heads, but bleeding in streams from a desperate gash across the face, and severe cuts upon his left arm and thigh. Still holding on his course, he never drew bridle till he reached the point where Nader stood, sur-

* Bero!—"begone!"

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rounded by his officers, when, instantly dismounting, he laid the gory heads at his master's feet, and sank on the ground there himself, quite exhausted by loss of blood. "I think I was right in keeping that fellow in my service," said he significantly to Caleb Allee Beg, who was close to him: "let him be carefully looked after; by the beard of Allee! he is worth it all." When Assad Allee recovered of his wounds, he was made a Sudeval,* with the rank of Beg; and not very long after, rose to the command of five hundred men.

Far different was the fate of another delinquent, of no mean rank, who was detected in purloining a set of silver-embroidered horse-trappings, and some brocaded ornaments, from a merchant in the bazaar of Mushed.† It occurred at a time when Nader was particularly desirous to conciliate the inhabitants of the capital, from whom he expected to receive important assistance towards certain objects he had then in view. The merchant complained to his Highness, and, to the confusion of the wretched delinquent, who believed himself secure even from suspicion, brought along with him sufficient evidence of the fact. Long did the

* Commander of an hundred men.

† Such a crime in a person of such rank may strike the European reader with astonishment, but such meannesses are common enough in Persia among all ranks, particularly as the highest officers of state often rise from the lowest stations in life.

deluded man attempt to prevaricate, and even to deny his guilt with indignation; nor was it until confronted and detected in every subterfuge that he took to change his ground. But when all was fully proved, he became as mean and cringing as he had at first been confident and indignant. He entreated for mercy in the most abject terms; and when he saw contempt and indignation darkening the brow of Nader, he turned to his accuser, and besought him, with all the earnestness of terror, to plead in his behalf. The effort was worse than vain, for the disgust which his conduct inspired, exasperated the displeasure of his judge, and increased the severity of his punishment. He was delivered over to the executioners, with orders to deprive him of his right hand, to cut off his ears, and setting him on an ass, with his head towards the tail, to lead him, thus mutilated, through all the principal streets and baazars of Mushed, proclaiming before him that such was the manner in which his Highness thought fit to punish a pitiful and cowardly thief.

So rigid were the notions of Nader on the subject of military conduct, that he made it a rule never to continue an officer who had frequently been unfortunate, in commands of importance; and he would often punish with severity those who failed in an enterprize, without making very particular enquiry into the cause of their miscar-

riage—for it was a maxim with his Highness, that when no overwhelming disparity of force exists, discomfitures more frequently proceed from gross mistakes, neglect of the proper military precautions, or infractions of discipline, than from any other cause; and these he considered as inexcusable in officers honoured with his confidence. A striking instance of this inflexibility of principle was given in his conduct to his own brave and excellent brother, Ibrahim Khan, after his loss of the battle of Kermaighan. The Zoheir-u-dowlut* had been sent with a large force to punish certain tribes of rebel Koords and Toorkomans who had mustered in arms near Semulghan, and bade defiance to the officers of government who were sent to collect the revenue. He met and engaged them at a place named Kermaighan; but his troops, dispirited by the treacherous desertion of certain friendly Koordish Chiefs and their followers, and being sorely pressed by superior numbers, at length broke and fled; and Ibrahim found no small difficulty in rallying a small party, with which he made good his retreat into the fort of Youz-bashee, which was fortunately in his rear. From thence, after having been closely invested for three or four days, he escaped by night, and made the best of his way to meet his brother, who

* It will be recollected that this appellation, signifying "the supporter of the state," had been bestowed upon Ibrahim Khan.

had gone to chastise the Yamoot, the Tekeh, and the Salour Toorkomans in the Desert; and who having put many of them to death, destroying also their villages and much cultivation, was returning in triumph when he heard of the disaster at Kermaighan.

So soon as Ibrahim entered his presence, he upbraided him bitterly with imprudence and want of circumspection, from which causes alone, he insisted, the disaster had proceeded. "In whom can I repose confidence," said he sternly, "if I find myself deceived in my opinion of you? With the troops which you commanded, I have fought many a battle and gained as many victories. *I* never saw them turn their backs to the foe; nor would you have had to complain of them now, had they been confident in their leader. But that headlong and boyish rashness against which I have so often warned you, defeats the efforts of courage, and renders zeal a dangerous quality. How should soldiers follow one whose actions prove him to be a child, while his beard would declare him a man?"

Ibrahim, who hung his head from shame and mortification at the condition in which he was forced to appear before his brother, raised a glance of reproach and indignation at these severe and in truth unmerited sarcasms: but he repressed the keen retort that rose to his lips, and casting once

more his eyes upon the ground, replied with an air of proud humility, "It is the misfortune of your servant to have offended your Highness;—he disputes not the degree of his guilt, nor deprecates his punishment. May your Highness find servants more faithful and successful than Ibrahim!" Nader only replied with a look; and so perfect was his command of countenance, that nothing was to be detected there beyond a fixed determination to perform his duty: yet some of those about his person, who knew him best, declared that they could trace a quivering of the muscles, which indicated a painful internal struggle. He turned to Caleb Allee Beg, "I give you charge of the Khan's person; see that he is kept in close confinement until farther orders." Ibrahim bowed low, with his hand placed on his breast as duty requires to a superior, and left the presence in charge of Caleb Allee, without another word.

But though the General's systematic devotion to military rules and discipline induced him to put a force upon his feelings, and to show the world that not even for the sake of his own brother would he sacrifice a single point of his principles, Nader loved that brother too sincerely, and was too anxious to see him again in his proper place, at the head of his troops, to permit his long continuance under arrest: in fact, Ibrahim was too much a favourite with the soldiers to render

such a measure safe or politic. Before a week passed, he received a khelut and his liberty; and Ibrahim understood his brother's sentiments too well to take offence at a conduct which, though harsh in appearance, was perhaps required for the preservation of that discipline to which so much of his military success was due.

CHAPTER II.

PROGRESS OF A CONQUEROR.

It was not until the commencement of A. H. 1141 (A. D. 1728) that tranquillity was so firmly established in Khorasan as to allow his Highness to commence with vigour the great enterprize he had so long contemplated—the expulsion of the Affghaun usurpers from Persia. The encroachments of the Abdallee Affghauns first occupied his attention. The fierce tribes who bear that name, and who inhabit the country around Herat, united under the command of Mahomed Khan, had not only possessed themselves of that city, and thrown off their allegiance to the Persian crown, but had even carried their audacity so far, in A. H. 1135, as to attempt the siege of Mushed itself; and though they were foiled in their ambitious hopes, and forced to retreat to their own territories by the change of affairs in Khorasan, they still continued their invasions on the eastern parts of the

province, and harassed the inhabitants by the most daring acts of plunder and hostility. The repression of such outrages, therefore, was a measure which his Highness felt it incumbent on him to carry into effect.

This, however, was not the first occasion on which the victorious troops of his Highness were called upon to measure their strength with that of the fierce Abdallees. More than twelve months before this period, the insolence of certain Affghaun chiefs of Seistan, who had invaded Kayn, a city of Khorasan, had provoked the wrath of Nader, and he marched against them with an army of eight thousand men, and a small train of artillery. Hoossein Sultaun, the principal leader of the enemy, abandoned by his associates, who fled to Sultaun Ashruff at Ispahan, shut himself up in his castle at the conqueror's approach, but soon found it expedient to submit to his mercy. Nader, upon this, resolved to follow up the blow, by punishing certain tribes of Affghauns inhabiting the districts around Herat. The journey through the Desert was attended with extreme difficulty; and the troops were subjected to a degree of hardship which can hardly be conceived. It was in the month of August, and a portion of the way lay through a sandy desert entirely destitute of water, the light particles of which were constantly set in motion by the parching wind that blew

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over its surface. Here the sufferings of the men were intense: exhausted with thirst and fatigue, it was with great difficulty they could drag themselves along, and the necessary equipment of arms and provisions became an intolerable burden. In vain did their officers encourage them by exhortation and example; they were powerless; their inflamed and bloodshot eyes, their parched throats and throbbing temples, too plainly declared that the scorching sun and burning sand were enemies not to be contended with. Some of them, exhausted with heat and languor, stepped out of their ranks and lay down to die, in spite of all their comrades or commanders could do to rouse them; and in a little while they found a ready grave in the heaps of drifting sand. Others, with starting eyeballs, and tongues rattling in their dry husky mouths, howled in furious anguish, till death or insensibility put an end to their torments. The moment a man died, his corse became putrid from intensity of heat; blood exuded from every pore; and the limbs, if touched or roughly handled, separated from the livid and fast dissolving body.

In this state of things, the difficulty of dragging along the artillery was so great, that most commanders would probably have abandoned it entirely, and turned their attention only to the means of saving the army. But the resolution of Nader

was not to be shaken; he knew that the possession of artillery was essential to the success of his enterprize, and he never entertained a thought of abandoning either the one or the other. The guns, dismounted from their carriages, the wheels of which sank deep into the sand, were placed upon sledges hastily constructed for the occasion from such materials as the camp afforded, and to furnish which every chest and trunk was knocked to pieces. To these were yoked the strongest camels, which, assisted by a party of the freshest and ablest-bodied men, constantly relieving each other, succeeded in dragging them along. Their progress indeed was slow, and the loss both in men and in camels was great; but Nader himself superintended, and participated in the labour. Mounted on a powerful camel, he made the most indefatigable efforts, and by his perseverance, and the unbounded influence he exercised over the minds of his followers, he succeeded in stimulating them to a constancy of exertion, which, under such circumstances, was almost incredible. It is true, he lavished on the select band who performed this arduous duty, almost all the refreshments and resources the army could command. The water-skins, which had been provided and carried on camels, were drained for their use; and the moment a camel dropped from over exertion, or was strained, or split up from the uncertain footing of

the sand, it was opened by these men, who obtained the store of water contained in its stomach.

He spared neither praise, threats, nor upbraidings, rewards nor punishments, but dispensed them liberally as suggested by the conduct of individuals passing beneath his eye. A Koordish soldier exerted himself so much to extricate one of the guns from a sand-wreath in which it had sunk, that the blood gushed from his nose and ears, and he fell down almost insensible. Nader, who was in the act of taking a mouthful of water, instantly ordered the man to be brought, had his burning brows bathed with the very liquid he was about to drink, and ordered him to be placed upon a camel, and taken care of. He was afterwards promoted. Not many minutes afterwards, he chastised severely with his own hand a man of his own guard, whom he detected saving himself, and shy of yielding his strength to one of the sledges which sank deep from the weight of a heavy gun. "What!" said he to the officer who had in vain tried to rouse the man to exertion, "can you not force the rascal to yield his lazy shoulders to the task? Let me deal with him then; do you look after more honest fellows, who will not cheat their comrades, or leave them in the lurch at a pinch." The voice of the General alone had the requisite effect; but not content with this, he exercised the thong, with which he

rode, upon the man's back and shoulders, till he writhed and worked away, but did not dare to utter a cry.

Two days did this scene of almost hopeless exertion continue: night yielded but faint relief, for though water was to be had by digging where we halted, it was no easy nor speedy business to procure it in sufficient quantities to satisfy the thirst of so many thousand men and cattle. Hundreds perished ere assistance could be afforded them; and the might and mercy of Allah alone, ever favouring the virtuous and the bold, enabled us to cross this dreary, fatal desert, and to reach at last the more fertile districts bordering on the territory of Herat.

There were, in these districts, many strongholds which it became necessary to reduce; and some of them gave so much trouble from the treachery, as well as the obstinate bravery of their garrisons, that we were forced to put some of them entirely to the sword, as an example to others. At length we laid siege to the strong fortress of Sunkhan, not far from Ghorian, and having received reinforcements of men and guns from Mushed, we commenced a vigorous cannonade. An event occurred during this cannonade which proved how much the sacred person of his Highness was under the special care of Providence, and showed also how surely divine justice, sooner or later,

overtakes the workers of evil. He had occupied himself for a while in directing the artillery, who were engaged in levelling one of the largest guns of the train, and had but just moved a few paces away from it, when it burst, scattering destruction around. Many men were killed by the accident, and among others, Seyed Sooltaun, the chief of Diroom, who had so frequently abused the mercy of his Highness, and involved the country in confusion and bloodshed. Nader himself remained untouched, and, looking calmly around, observed with a smile to those about him, who still trembled at the danger he had so narrowly escaped, "Ay! trust ye confidently in Nader's fortune, and be sure that neither the wit nor the wickedness of man can alter the day of destiny. In this stroke behold the arm of the Almighty, and be sure that it has fallen upon traitors alone—remove their bodies from my view." The words of his Highness were sooth,—for it was soon discovered that Seyed Sooltaun, having seduced certain Toorkoman soldiers, some of whom were killed along with him on this occasion, had entered into correspondence with the Affghaun chiefs, and had agreed to favour their efforts in a sally to be made upon our batteries, by which it was expected that we should be deprived of our artillery. Some of those engaged in the plot, struck with this interposition of Providence, confessed their treason,

and thus approved the wisdom and penetration of our valiant General.

A principal tower on the wall of this fortress having been thrown down, our warriors speedily found entrance; and his Highness, irritated by many instances of bad faith on the part of the garrison, ordered every man to be put to the sword.

A few days after this success, advices were received that a large Affghaun force was approaching from the neighbourhood of Herat; and Nader lost no time in advancing to meet them. The troops of Khorasan were now, for the first time, to be opposed to these formidable enemies in a general action, and his Highness was resolved to omit no precaution calculated to secure a victory. There was no denying that the Persians, enervated by long inaction during the last reign, entertained a decided dread of the fierce and hardy Affghauns; and Nader, quite aware of this prepossession, determined not to risk a general engagement until he should have succeeded in inspiring his men with greater confidence in their own prowess by securing to them some minor successes. With this view he ranged his troops in order of battle, but protected them by strong intrenchments, and gave orders that no one should dare to move from his post, but stand prepared to repel with their matchlocks and arrows, whatever

attack the Affghauns might be disposed to make. In the mean time, putting himself at the head of five hundred chosen men, on whose valour and fidelity he could rely, he skirmished with such parties of the enemy as came out to oppose him, and made some daring attacks with extraordinary success, cutting to pieces a number of their people. At length, harassed in this manner for four or five successive days, and afraid to expose themselves in closer conflict to so determined and circumspect a foe, the Affghauns retired in confusion to Herat, leaving our troops in possession of the field.

It would have been very desirable to have followed up these successes by a vigorous assault upon the Affghaun chiefs of Herat, and to have humbled the arrogant and turbulent Abdallees by a well-timed and effectual blow, but the time was not yet come; tidings of fresh disturbances in Khorasan were received from Mushed; the perverse folly of the weak Shah Tahmaseb, ever jealous of the increasing fame of his victorious General, encouraged the spirit of disaffection which was but too deeply rooted in the tribes of the province; and the districts of the Koords and Toorkomans were once more in rebellion. Nader was forced to quit his prey, and march back to Mushed; nor was it until the period above-mentioned, the commencement of A. H. 1141, that he found leisure to

resume his patriotic views, and turn his arms against the invaders and usurpers of his country.

The preparations for this expedition were begun after the No-roz,* and his Highness celebrated the festival of that season by a series of splendid entertainments to the chiefs and officers of his army, at which he took occasion to distribute among them so many dresses of honour, and presents of horses and arms, that every one entitled to the smallest place in his esteem received some proof of his favour and liberality.

It was the end of April before these preparations were completed, and the army then marched to Jam, a town situated on the road from Mushed to Herat. There his Highness reviewed his troops; and assuredly a finer and better appointed army had not been seen in Khorasan since the glorious days of the mighty Abbas. A few manœuvres, of no eventual consequence, took place during our farther progress; but the enemy did not show themselves in force until we had advanced to Kaffer Kallah, before the walls of which fortress their General, Allah-Yar-Khan, drew up his forces in order of battle, and awaited our approach.

Nader, confident in the valour and discipline of his troops, was eager to bring matters to an issue, and force the enemy to fight; but ever prudent and wary, he resolved to guard against the possible

* Festival of the Mahometan new year, kept at the vernal equinox.

effects of the impetuous attack with which the Affghauns commonly commence an engagement, and which often succeeds in throwing their enemy into fatal confusion. He therefore protected his infantry by powerful batteries of cannon, and parties of zumboorucks* and matchlock men strongly intrenched; and he sent a body of cavalry, as at the battle of Sunkhan, to commence the engagement. But this time the enemy were not to be baffled so easily. Regardless of our manœuvres, they made a furious attack upon the right of our line, and supported it so well by constant reinforcements, that, although multitudes of their men were mowed down by the showers of cannon and musket balls, the rest found means to force our intrenchments, and break the line of infantry behind them.

It was on such occasions that the genius of Nader was roused into display. He saw that a powerful effort was necessary; and hastily collecting a body of his gholaums and chosen guards, he put himself at their head, and charged the Affghaun cavalry which had penetrated our line. His well-known shout was heard above the din of battle, and appalled the hearts of the enemy, while it dispelled the panic that was beginning to spread among his own troops. Armed with his terrible battle-axe, he spurred furiously against Amaun Oollah, an Affghaun chief of huge stature and great valour, who had led the party and was deal-

* Camel artillery.

ing death around him: a single blow cleft helmet and head, and the axe descending with fearful force, sank deep in the neck of his powerful dun charger;—both horse and man in a moment lay rolling on the plain. It was like the stroke of a thunder-bolt, and like that paralyzed all the followers of the slain; they reined up, wavered, and gave back, pursued by the dreadful battle-axe, which descended to right and left, on the flying wretches, like the sword of the angel of death.

But Nader had unfortunately received a lance thrust in the foot, which soon became extremely painful; his troops too, were much exhausted, so that though the enemy fled towards the fort in no small confusion, it was not deemed prudent to pursue them; so we took up our quarters on the field of battle, and lay on our arms for the night.

Undismayed by the result of this severe action, the Affghauns determined to try the fate of another battle, and were found in the morning, drawn out in line ready to assail us. Our General was nothing loth to meet them, and an engagement ensued, which terminated in the complete defeat of the Affghauns, and the possession of Kaffer Kallah, which fell into our hands with all the stores and artillery of the vanquished. From henceforth the progress of the army to Herat, though gallantly disputed by the enemy, was signalized by a succession of victories on our part,

and defeat and treacherous negotiations on theirs. At length after a bloody battle between Shekeewan and Herat, Allah-yar-Khan the ruler of that city and principal chief of the Affghauns, submitted to the conqueror, who granted him the most liberal terms. The Khan himself was continued in his government, giving hostages for his fidelity; and many of the Affghauns were received into the service of his Highness. They agreed to this the more readily, because they were given to understand one of the first expeditions to be engaged in, was likely to be against their hereditary enemies the Ghiljees, at that time in possession of Ispahan. The whole of this expedition and conquest was completed in less than two months, and the army returned to Mushed, towards the end of June.

While the glory of his Highness was thus ripening in Khorasan, and the whole of that extensive province was gradually subjected to the royal authority, Sultaun Ashruff, the successor of Sultaun Meer Mahmood Ghiljee, who held his court at Ispahan, had partly by force of arms, partly by negotiation and treachery, obtained possession of Yezd and Kermaun, and extended his sway over the whole south of Persia: but by some extraordinary infatuation, he neglected, or overlooked the storm which was brewing in the north of Khorasan: according to the saying of the sage, that "God

blinds the eyes of those who are destined to fall into the pit; and, when the hour of fate has come, the prey runs of itself into the snare of the hunter."

But when he learned that Nader had proceeded towards Herat against the Abdallees, an expedition so arduous that he hoped the wonted good fortune of his Highness might desert him, he conceived that while the northern and western parts of Khorasan were thus left unguarded, a favourable opportunity was offered for invading the province, and for establishing in it a footing that might in time be improved into entire possession.

With this view, he mustered the flower of his troops, summoned around him those left in garrison in the different cities of his empire, and commenced his march towards Khorasan. Some idea may be formed of the exhausted state to which the once mighty capital of Persia had been reduced by massacres and misery, when it is known that a garrison of two hundred Affghaun soldiers was considered sufficient to keep the place in awe, and retain possession of it while the Sultaun was absent in search of new conquests. At Casveen, Tehran, Koom, and other important places, which had not been reduced so low, he took the precaution of turning out of their dwellings, and expelling by force beyond the walls, all the male inhabitants fit to carry arms, in order that the small garrisons

appointed for these towns might be sufficient to retain them and keep the remaining people in check.

It was the intention of Nader to give his troops some repose after their severe duty against the Abdallees; but information having reached him of the approach of Ashruff towards the frontiers, he issued orders for assembling the army at Subzawar, about the beginning of the Mohurrum,* and early in September his Highness, accompanied by his Majesty the Shah, took the field with an army which, in point of numbers and completeness of equipment, surpassed any that had been seen in Khorasan. Never had his Highness entertained so large, so select, or so devoted a body of gholaums; never had his guards been so numerous and well-appointed; never had he mustered together so many and such numerous bodies of well-armed and well-mounted cavalry. The number of fighting men amounted in all to about twenty-eight thousand: of these an unusually large number were provided with fire-arms, and the train of artillery was large and well-furnished. Their late victories over the Abdallees had inspired the troops with confidence in their own prowess;—their spirits were high, and they burned to be led against the enemy.

* The period of mourning, among the followers of Allee, for the murder of his sons Hussun and Hoossain.

Before arrangements for marching were fully completed, our movements were quickened by intelligence that Sultaun Ashruff had reached and invested the city of Semnaun. This being a place of importance, as commanding one of the chief passes into Khorasan, his Highness dispatched a courier to the governor, with assurances of speedy support, and commands to hold out to the last, while he lost not an hour himself in moving forward with his army by forced marches, accompanied by the Shah.

On the night before the camp broke up, I was posted on a tuppeh, or hillock, on the right, which commanded a view of the whole extended encampment; and being kept awake as well by impatience as by duty, I enjoyed a full view of this great army getting into motion. Leaning over the wall of a mouldering bastion, the remains of a fort which had once crowned the hillock, I fell into a soothing train of reflection, from which I did not seek to rouse myself. The moon shining with more than half her orb, rode high in heaven; and of the few stars which her lustre permitted to appear, that called the eagle,* which I have ever believed to sway my destiny, sparkled with scarcely diminished radiance. "Blessed star!" exclaimed I mentally, as I gazed on the brilliant point of heavenly fire, "mayest thou ever shine thus pure and

* Altair, from the Arabic Ul-Taer, or "the bird."

bright, and shed thy benign influence on the fortunes of Ismael! May the lustre of thy rays, and the blessed calm which they pour at this moment on his soul, be prophetic of the tenor of his future life!"

Beneath me, on the plain, lay scattered the tents of the army, white, and glittering in the moonshine. Many a dusky mass might be discerned among them, which imagination might shape into bodies of men and horses still in the attitudes of profound repose. The only sounds that arose on the still, calm air, were from the tinkling of the mule and camel bells, the neigh of a horse, or the faint clash of arms from a sentry, as he walked up and down at his post, or when one of the horses, kept ready harnessed for use, shook his bridle-chains, or the mace or scymetar that hung at his saddle-bow, as he pawed and stamped with impatience.

Presently the first dubious tinge of dawn stole over the East, and the quick rattle of a drum came rolling on the stillness of morning. It was answered from many quarters, and in less than five minutes after, a murmur might be heard, which increased like the buzz of a swarming hive of bees, and an obscure movement could be detected in the plain. The embers of the fires which had been suffered to die out, were now shook into life, and threw a red and flickering glare on the objects around. The tents which dotted the plain began

one by one to fall and disappear; and as the pale and orange light arose in the sky, the glimmer of arms, the flash of helmets, of swords, and lance-points, broke from the dusky masses that formed on the ground where they stood. In a little time, I could distinguish the different corps forming into their several divisions, while the camp-followers and baggage-cattle drew off by degrees, and formed into masses distinct from the fighting men. It was a splendid sight. The morning was brilliant, and a heavy dew had lent a freshness to the early dawn, which the fierce heat of the season denied to the later hours of day. The Shah soon issued forth from the extensive royal inclosure of crimson serpurdehs, preceded by multitudes of Shatirs* and Furoshes, and surrounded by a splendid attendance of officers and gholaums, all glittering in magnificent dresses, and mounted on beautiful horses. The appearance of his Highness's suite was less gorgeous; there was no exhibition of finery either on his own dress or on that of his attendants; but the purpose-like, thoroughly well-armed and mounted band that mustered around him, were composed of men whose weather-beaten aspect betokened hard service, as their steady and composed expression proclaimed unshaken resolution and devotion to their chief.

As a mark of respect to the royal presence, the

* Running footmen.

guards of his Highness did not appear in immediate attendance upon his person, but marched as a distinct corps, of which the exact discipline and excellent equipment excited the admiration of the whole camp.

By adhering strictly to the rule of enlisting serviceable men and horses alone, and by observing an equally rigid attention to the regular payment of these, the several corps of cavalry had been materially improved; and some were composed of men and officers to be implicitly depended upon. A spirit of emulation had thus been excited among the chiefs who brought bodies of their own followers into the field, and they followed the example of their leader in retaining in their service such men alone as were likely to prove stout and trust-worthy soldiers. A similar principle had guided the General and his officers in classing the various corps of infantry; and several picked bodies of match-lock men and archers had been trained with care to the practice of his Highness's peculiar tactics, until their activity and steadiness were equalled by their skill. An infinite deal of pains and exertion had been used in completing the stores and equipment of the artillery, large as well as small, and a numerous body of well-trained Topechees * had been regularly organized and drilled. Even the less regular part of the army

* Artillerymen.

had imbibed a spirit of intrepidity and order from the bearing of their companions, which placed them much above the level of common Persian soldiers under other leaders. Such was the character of the army with which the hitherto successful and victorious Nader marched from Subzawar to meet the usurper Ashruff, and drive his cruel marauding Affghauns from the fair plains of Irak: and it was with a glow of no common enthusiasm that I beheld them file off, corps by corps, from their encamping-ground, and occupy, in long extended columns, the road which leads to Muzeenaun. The numerous banners gleamed above them in the morning light, and the first beams of the rising sun sparkled on the points of their lances, and glanced from their helmets and mail like the moon-beams on the waters of a dark sea. When the last corps had left the ground, and the baggage, under protection of the rear-guard, had got into motion, the outposts were all withdrawn, and giving up my charge, I galloped on to the station I loved best, near the person of the General.

A march of eight days brought the army to the neighbourhood of Bostam, near which some scouting-parties and skirmishers of the Affghauns were observed, and a few prisoners were made. From these we learned that Seyed Allee Khan, a general high in the confidence of Ashruff, had

been dispatched with a large body of troops and artillery, to check his Highness's approach towards Semnaun, but that on receiving accounts of the force of the army of Khorasan, he had retired towards Damghaun, to await the farther orders of his master. "The fox retreats and doubles to deceive the hunter; the tiger is most dangerous when he crouches," observed Nader, when he heard this report. "Let the sentries be doubled; let the main-guards sleep on their arms; let every chief and officer in command be on the alert to-night, and visit his line of sentries every hour; and let a Mim-bashee,* with a sufficient guard, patrole round the camp the night."

The result proved the penetration of his excellency;—at two hours after midnight, the fire of the sentries, and the shouts of the guard, announced the approach of danger; and the yells of the Affghauns, when they found themselves discovered, as they charged our lines, declared to us its nature. But they found us not unprepared:—from behind each tent and heap of baggage, they were saluted with a destructive fire; their horses stumbled over the tent-ropes and heaps of lumber placed purposely to impede their onset; and after losing no inconsiderable number of men, and finding no good likely to be effected, they withdrew in confusion, and molested us no more.

*A commander of a thousand—equivalent in rank to a colonel.

Next day, his Highness advanced to Damghaun, in hopes of overtaking Seyed Allee Khan; but that officer, disheartened by his miscarriage, had retreated to join his master, who, seeing that matters had assumed a serious aspect, raised the siege of Semnaun, and marched forward to meet his enemy. It appeared to be the Affghaun's intention to surprise us if he could, and attempt to turn our flank; for some days were consumed in manœuvres and detours, which terminated in his passing to the southward of Damghaun, and occupying a position near the village of Mehmandost, where his Highness, who had watched all these operations with a wary eye, had previously taken up his ground.

The moment had now clearly arrived for deciding the fate of these two great chieftains, and probably of Persia, by a battle which could not fail of being obstinate and bloody in the extreme: and however high might be the hopes and courage of our troops, there were few among us who could view the approach of such a struggle without intense interest, if not anxiety.

During the night which preceded this conflict, the principal chiefs and officers of highest influence, went round each corps as it lay upon its arms on the gravelly slope of a hill, to encourage the soldiers, to recommend silence, attention to discipline and to the orders of their officers, and

strenuous preparation of arms and accoutrements for the business of the ensuing day. These exhortations were not without effect, and though the buzz of preparation might rise upon the ear, there was nothing to be detected of noise or idle clamour.

A very different scene was passing in the enemy's camp; tumult and disorder appeared to be triumphant there. The manners and habits of the Affghauns had in truth undergone an important change since the period of their successful invasion of Persia. They were then poor, but brave and adventurous; and, as a means of conducing to the success of their enterprizes, they submitted to a certain degree of organization and discipline, which had given them a vast superiority over the impatient and luxurious troops of an effeminate monarch. But when both men and officers had become enriched by plunder and by conquest, and when the abject submission of the vanquished had removed all immediate cause of alarm, their vigilance and discipline declined; and the very errors which had been fatal to the conquered, crept into the conduct of the victors. Ashruff himself, although at first he acted the part of a wise and prudent sovereign, appears after his successful negotiation with the court of Constantinople, to have deemed himself beyond the reach of danger, and to have given himself up to

the enjoyments of peace. Under such circumstances, it was by no means strange that the moral energy of the Affghaun soldiers should have declined; their courage and love of enterprize indeed remained, but these were no longer regulated by the prudent spirit of order and control which had made them so formidable to inexperienced and undisciplined troops. The number of veterans of which the invading army had originally been composed, was greatly diminished by the casualties of foreign warfare; and though a few recruits had joined them, it was now principally made up of corps raised in different parts of the country, among which no small proportion were Persians loosely attached to the conqueror, and who had been employed for the most part in harassing and plundering the inhabitants of the several districts where they had been stationed. There was but little unanimity to be expected among such men, and even the mutual ties and sympathies of the several Affghaun corps, had been weakened by separation and divided interests: control too had become irksome from disuse, and it was not without a powerful effort on the part of the commanders, that their troops could be brought to submit even imperfectly to the restraint, which the discipline of a camp in presence of an enemy, imperiously demands. As corps after corps of these troops came to their ground, the shouting and the

uproar increased, and the sounds of ill-timed mirth and revelry were mingled with those of anger and execration. Much of the night was passed in this disorder; but by degrees the noises died away, and were succeeded by a profound stillness, betokening the deepest slumber throughout the host.

There were not wanting suggestions to take advantage of this apparent heedlessness, the truth of which was confirmed by our scouts, and duly reported to the General. But his Highness, with that caution which long experience joined to native sagacity had taught him to observe in his first rencounter with enemies he was a stranger to, declined venturing an issue of so much consequence, upon the uncertainty of a night attack, and ordered his officers to remain quiet, but strictly vigilant, till morning.

CHAPTER III.

VICTORIES AND HONOURS.

It might be three hours after midnight, and the darkness was profound, when returning from my tour of duty, I met Caleb Allee Beg, who had been similarly employed. "What news?" said he, after we had recognized each other: "what have you heard or seen?"—"Nothing," replied I; "the stillness in yonder camp appears to be that of perfect repose: who could believe that the dawn must witness the furious charge of that sleeping host upon us, whom they at present appear to heed so little. They surely mean to attack us?" "Depend upon that," said Caleb Allee; "and slumbering as they seem to be, they must be greatly changed from those Affghauns whom I once knew, if, negligent and unwary as you now believe them, we should not experience from them a warm, and probably an unexpected reception. The Affghauns are no

despicable foe, as those who live to see to-morrow's eve shall confess."

I was struck with the grave tone of his voice as he uttered these words. "What ails you, my good friend?" said I; "are you ill? You were not wont to be thus cast down upon the eve of a battle. What are these Affghauns, after all? We shall beat them as we have done their brethren of Herat! The star of Nader's fortune is not dimmed, nor is his arm weakened; see what a noble army obeys his voice!—depend upon it, the faces of his enemies shall be blackened with confusion, and those of his friends brightened by victory, ere the sun which is now about to rise, shall set again."

"I doubt it not, my young friend; the fortune of Nader is exalted, and his arm will triumph. I am not ill; neither is it doubt or fear for the event of this day's conflict that weighs upon my spirits: but the man who sees his last day about to dawn, has cause for grave reflection, although he may not fear to meet his end. Whatever be the general result of this day's battle, it will be fatal to me."—"What is it you mean, Khan!" said I, astonished at a strain which I had never heard from him before; "the fate of every man, I know, is written on his forehead by the finger of the Almighty; but who can read it? What magic mirror have you used to reflect these unseen and mysterious characters in a language in-

telligible to mortal sense? Death is the portion of every soldier, and the cup may be held to my lips or to yours, but let us not taste the draught before our fate commands it."—"My friend, the cup is already at my lips: the mysterious words have been interpreted by a tongue that leads not astray. You know I am no coward, no superstitious Moollah to be startled by shadows; but this very night, not three hours ago, a spectre crossed my path, and gazed on me with a mild and melancholy aspect. I cannot describe its form, nor were its words sensible to mortal ears, but, as it faded into darkness, this warning was impressed upon my soul; "Child of clay! prepare to return to the dust from whence thou camest: to-morrow thy soul is required for judgment!"

The solemnity with which he made this extraordinary communication, failed not to impress me with a corresponding awe: nevertheless, I endeavoured to convince him that he had been misled by some phantom of the imagination. His only answer was a gentle shake of the head; and the melancholy smile which played for a moment over his features, illuminated as they were by the gleam of a dying watch-fire, convinced me that the warning had sunk too deeply in his mind to be charmed away at such a moment by any argument of mine. I told him that I trusted ere

close of day to laugh with him at his idle apprehension, and that we should then determine whether his spectre belonged to the class of Gouls, Affreets, or Gins. "Well, well," replied he, "if I survive this day, I give you leave to laugh at me, and call me Goul-seer as much as you please: meantime, let not the thought of death make you or me exert ourselves the less; let us remember what we owe our master, and think that the soldier who sleeps the sleep of death on the field of battle, shall wake in the glorious realms of Paradise." We parted, and I returned to my post filled with reflections on the wonderful power of a superstition, to which, though my reason refused its assent, I could not be altogether insensible; nor was the awe which I felt, diminished by the hour or the circumstances under which we all were placed. In such musings all desire for sleep fled, and I employed myself till dawn in preparing for the duties to which its appearance would summon me.

I was roused at length by the short beat of a drum, which, echoing from one quarter of the camp to another, speedily put the whole in motion. Nader, pursuing the system he had hitherto successfully practised against his Affghaun foes, formed the whole of his army in one compact body, placing the cavalry on either wing in readiness to take advantage of any impression that

might be made by the fire of his artillery. The cannon were placed in front, concealed in part by bodies of matchlockmen; the main body of the army was similarly protected, and intrenchments were thrown up at every vulnerable point. Strict orders were given that no one should presume to move from his post, but that the impetuous charge expected according to custom from the Affghauns, should be received where they stood, and checked by a steady fire from artillery and musketry, until his Highness should see fit to order an advance.

The earliest peep of dawn found the army already in this array. As I was certain that the weight of the battle would fall upon the General's guards, among whom I still retained my command, I solicited and obtained permission to remain with them. We were stationed on the right, from whence we overlooked a gradually sloping plain, at the foot of which ran the bed of the small stream that irrigates the cultivation of Mehmandost, but now nearly dry. On the corresponding slope of the other side lay the Affghaun camp. The sounds which issued from our troops, and which we neither sought to suppress or disguise, roused the Affghauns from sleep:—at least it was not until our arrangements were far advanced, that faint murmurs arising from their host announced that they were in motion. As

the morning light increased, we could discern the opposite plain, dark with clustering and moving crowds, which by degrees arranged themselves into separate bodies, and these at length formed into three dense masses of nearly equal magnitude. —It was an interest of no common kind that fixed our earnest gaze upon these dark and threatening columns. The practised eyes of our officers in a moment saw that they exceeded our army in numbers; but, whether they were intimidated by the good countenance we displayed, or undecided in their plans, they manifested no disposition to commence hostilities. One or two bodies of cavalry darting from their respective masses, made a show of attacking our flank; but the discharge of a few cannon, and a partial change in the position of a corps, served to convince them that we were prepared, and they withdrew. After a while spent in these manœuvres, the enemy seemed to have made up their minds to come to the point, and resolved, as we showed no disposition to move, to attack us in our position. A temporary suspension of all movements took place; the chiefs assembled in council, and we could distinguish them mustering round the white charger of the Sultaun himself, who, surrounded by a numerous assemblage of officers and gholaums, formed a conspicuous object in the field. These chiefs were soon to be seen galloping in all quarters to their posts; the mur-

mur of a great shout rose from the throng, and the whole Affghaun army moved rapidly forward in three divisions.

It was a gallant and spirit-stirring sight to see them bearing down upon us, more than thirty thousand strong, all admirably armed and equipped. Hundreds of the small flags of companies, so much in use among the Affghauns, waved over their heads; and the points of their spears, and their drawn swords, gleamed with a flickering light above the dark and compact masses. Two of these bodies were entirely composed of cavalry, while that which occupied the centre consisted both of cavalry and infantry, accompanied by the greater part of their artillery. They moved on gently and in good order to the brink of the river's bed below them: it was an object with their leaders, no doubt, to pass this obstacle without the confusion which might attend a more rapid course. But scarcely had they formed upon the nearer bank, than uttering a fearful yell, the greater part of their cavalry dashed forward at full speed to the charge.

The space between the water-course and our position might be something less than half a mile, but we were quite prepared for this onset; the word was rapidly passed along to keep steady till the signal should be given, and then to pour upon the advancing enemy the full discharge of our

matchlocks and arrows. On they came; the thunder of their innumerable hoofs increasing every moment till it shook the very earth; their spears in rest and their naked scymetars gleaming over their heads, filling the air with their war-cries. It was a moment of breathless suspense; not a sound was to be heard throughout our host until the foremost of the Affghauns had reached within eighty yards. Human nature could have endured no longer, when the report of three cannon parting in quick succession rose above the uproar. Instantly they were answered by a volley from forty or fifty other pieces, and by the quick dropping fire of muskets, which soon increased to a continued roar. The whole line was enveloped in smoke, which for a few moments hid the enemy from our view; but when the light breeze of morning wafted it in part away, a striking change was seen in their condition. From the close order of the enemy, who had charged in a dense body, every shot we fired must have taken effect, and the front ranks were therefore almost totally destroyed: the plain was now strewed with men and horses, and those behind, who were spurring up at full speed, increased the confusion by stumbling over the bodies of their fallen friends. The deadly fire of matchlocks and of arrows still continued; and ever and anon the cannon scattered havoc among the amazed Affghauns, who, confounded at a resistance so determined, wavered,

drew up, and then turned and fled beyond reach of our shot.

A strong body of cavalry from each wing was immediately dispatched to take advantage of their disorder, and for a while the fugitives were slaughtered almost unresistingly; but as they fell back upon their reserve, and our fire ceased, they recovered somewhat from their panic, and drawing off on either hand, left our horsemen exposed to a heavy fire from the cannon and musketry of their centre division. This checked us in our turn; but instead of forming and making an orderly retreat, as they should have done, our men, flushed with success, thought only of carrying all before them—of galloping on, and cutting down the topechees of the Affghauns at their guns. This unlucky mistake was observed simultaneously by Nader and the enemy: the latter detached a farther force of horsemen to complete the confusion which their fire was fast effecting among our men, while his Highness pushed forward a strong body of cavalry, including the remainder of his own guards, to support and bring them off; and moved on himself in good order, with the matchlockmen and infantry, to act as circumstances should determine.

The engagement now became general and furious: what the Affghauns lacked in discipline, they possessed in personal strength and courage. They charged the most compact bodies of our

cavalry in parties of ten or twenty, and often broke them with great loss, by dint of determined bravery; and though their desultory devotion generally proved fatal to them in the end, it was not without a serious expense of lives to ourselves. So bloody was the struggle, that even the portion of his Highness's guards which had accompanied the first detachment in pursuit, thinned by discharges of cannon in front, and furiously assailed on either flank by the heavy battle-axes and long spears of the horsemen, began to fall into confusion and give back. I had hastily collected a small number of men to rally another corps of cavalry, which was shrinking under its heavy loss, when, casting my eyes towards my own companions, I saw them struggling with a fresh and powerful troop of Candaharees, who were led by some of the Sultaun's gholaums. The crisis was urgent in the extreme: calling out to my followers, and shouting aloud the well-known cry of the "Shurtee Naderee!"* we charged the new assailants, who, thinking that a fresh reinforcement had come up, were checked in their career.

At this moment, I observed Caleb Allee Beg, who was actively cheering on his men, hurled with great violence from his horse to the earth. A cannon-shot had struck him on the shoulder, and carried off his arm, with half the muscles of

* Life-guards of Nader.

his side. I flew to him as he lay gasping on the ground, when, gazing wildly at me for a moment, he recognized me, and said with a ghastly smile, "Ah, my friend! you will not laugh at me now! But go,—you are required; take my place and do your duty; mine is over!" There was, truly, no time for delay; consigning him to the care of two trusty men, I flew to the front, where the ground was still hotly contested, though the superiority of the enemy became every moment more decided. My presence and my voice, calling on them to remember who they were, exhorting them to fight for Nader, who even now was at hand with assistance, restored their sinking spirits; and by a strenuous effort, we once more gained ground upon our adversaries, and placed them between us and their own cannon. The junction of a party of our comrades, who succeeded in cutting their way through to where we stood, enabled us to support the struggle with better advantage; but by this time I discovered that the body of guards, of which I was now the leader, had been completely separated from the rest of the army in the fluctuations of the fight, and was opposed, unassisted, to a large force of cavalry, with the infantry and artillery still threatening in front. There was nothing for it but to fight while we could; so, shouting out once more to those around me, that Nader was driving them before him on our left, and that we

must open ourselves a path to join him, I called on them to close their ranks, and charge in that direction.

The name of Nader, echoed from hundreds of tongues in reply, startled the enemy, and aided the force of our charge. Their horsemen were borne down and fled before it, and we found ourselves fast closing with the line of artillery and musketeers. But from them we did not meet the reception I expected ;—they seemed to have their attention divided. " Charge them also," cried I ; " charge them, in the name of God, and they are ours !" The spirits of my companions were elevated by the success of our first effort, and the effect of this order was electrifying ; scarcely was there time for the guns to be fired, when the gunners were cut and trampled down, and their infantry were flying in all directions. At this moment an unlucky shot struck our banner-man, and the colours, as they fell, were seized upon by one among the enemy more bold than the rest ; fortunately, I saw the accident, and clapping stirrups to my horse's side, reached and cut down the Affghaun, whose sacrilegious hand had dared to touch the sacred ensign, catching it in my left-hand, so that it never touched the ground. Burning with enthusiasm, I cleared a path to the right and left with the sweep of my scymetar : " Onward ! onward !" cried I ; " who will abandon his colours ?

—who fears to follow his leader?" and gallantly followed by the whole of my remaining band, I plunged into the thickest of the enemy.

But though surprised and confounded, the Affghauns by no means gave way to their first panic. They turned upon us, and hemmed in our greatly diminished troop on all sides, depriving us of the power to charge them, as, with their long sharp swords, they rushed upon our horses, and dealt them ghastly and disabling wounds, while their riders were engaged with other assailants. And now did I suffer a loss which cost me a keener pang than many a graver misfortune in life;—my faithful Boorrauk had been severely wounded during our first successful charge, by a spear which broke in his chest; yet still he bore me gallantly through the fight, and trampled down many a one who attempted to assail his master. But the sword of an Affghaun reached his side at last, and inflicted another fearful wound. I saw the deed and revenged it dearly; for, with a blow of my sword, I clove the villain from shoulder to chest; but my unfortunate horse, staggering forward a pace or two, sank on his knees with a convulsive shudder; and scarcely had I time to disengage myself, when he fell on his side, and giving me one look with his bright intelligent eye, stretched out his quivering limbs, and breathed his last. Had my dearest friend

been murdered at my feet, the pang I felt could not have been more keen, nor my indignation greater than that which I experienced at the loss of this most faithful and invaluable companion of my toils.

The colours were still safe, and, intrenched behind my slaughtered horse, I kept all assailants at bay; but how long we could have held out against the odds opposed to us, I cannot say, for the unequal struggle was brought to a sudden close. Loud cries were heard on the left; and even through the infernal din which surrounded us, I could distinguish the loud and terrible voice of Nader shouting out his orders, and encouraging his men. All now was over; the shout was returned by every one of us that remained alive; the enemy, assailed in rear, broke, and melted from before us like snow in the April sun; and we, who but a moment before had been gasping and struggling for our lives, were left undisputed possessors of the ground, now covered with the flying foe.

Too much exhausted to pursue them, we were resting, panting on our arms, when his Highness, accompanied by a strong party of gholaums, rode up to us at speed. Checking his horse, he threw a single keen glance at us, and then gave rapid orders to several of his attendants to go and stop the pursuit, which had already led some of the

troops too far. "The place of encampment for this night is yonder, on the ground deserted by the enemy;—go! Let the several corps be mustered there, and let me have immediate returns of our loss in killed and wounded; leave only Muhabut Allee and half-a-dozen gholaums with me —I shall find guards enough here, and trusty ones too. What news?—how fares it, Ismael? No children's play this—you have found enough to do, it seems?—these fellows have fought like devils as they are.—Come, muster the men now; you must be my guard to camp. But how is this? on foot?"—"Your Highness sees my horse," —replied I, pointing to poor Boorrauk. "What! my old acquaintance?—your friend of the Desert? this is in truth a loss; but we must try to repair it: meantime, some of you give him a horse."— "Your Highness has sustained a greater loss— Caleb Allee Beg."—"Punah-be-khodah!* killed?" demanded Nader, in a voice of great emotion.— "Struck by a cannon-shot, while bravely leading your Highness's guards;—he cannot survive, if not already dead."—"Where is he? let me once more see my old and faithful servant," said Nader, stifling a groan; and motioned immediately to lead the way. The spot where I had left Caleb Allee was not far in our rear; for every inch of ground had been hotly contested, and we had advanced

* "God protect us!"

but little. We found him attended but by one aged soldier, for many years under his command, who bent over his mangled officer with a look of fixed sorrow, while his tears, mingling with the blood that trickled from a large wound in his head, dropped heavily on the breast of the dying man. A party of Affghauns, who swept this part of the plain after we had quitted it, had cut down the other attendant, and wounded this old man; but when they observed his white beard, and saw how he was occupied, the blow was not repeated;—they left him to himself, and, wounded as he was, he had propped up the body of the unfortunate Caleb Allee, supporting his head in his lap, and, covering his ghastly wounds with his garments, thus awaited the painful struggle of expiring nature.

The voice of the General, as he called him by his name, seemed to recall the fleeting senses of the dying man; for a gleam of intelligence lighted up his glazing eye, a faint smile played around his mouth, and he tried to raise his unwounded arm. But the effort was momentary,—as if he had but waited to receive his master's leave, the eye once more became dim, the features sank, and the spirit parted, to seek the reward of a good and faithful servant in the joys of Paradise. Nader bent over the dead, and covered his face for some moments with his hand; not a word was spoken, not a sound was heard; none dared

to intrude on the grief of their commander, or break this painful silence. When he rose, his countenance was calm, though grave; some thought they saw a tear sparkling in his eye: I cannot say if this were true, for I cared not to search into the feelings, or detect the weakness of my master; but so much I can declare, that neither on this or any other occasion have I witnessed Nader shed a tear. "Let the body be borne to the camp," said he, at last; "it shall rest in the holy shrine at Mushed! Let this old man be taken care of,—he shall find that Nader Koolee is not the man to abandon a good soldier and a faithful servant when his beard has become white, and his arms have lost their strength.—Ismael, you have done your duty:—Guards, I am satisfied with your conduct, and you shall have proofs that I am so—follow me to the camp."

We rode over a plain strewed with the bodies of men and horses. In the place where the guards had fought, many of our comrades swelled the multitude of slain; but for one of our men there lay at least five Affghauns on the field; and an emotion of pride rose within me, as Nader observed that nowhere were they heaped more thickly than where we had fought. By this time the enemy, who had fled at first in great confusion, had collected the remnant of his scattered bands, and was retreating in better order on the road to Tehran.

Our men were fast returning from pursuit, and joining their respective corps, in order to march to the place of encampment. The Shah, it is said, expressed much discontent at the conduct of his General, in so readily abandoning pursuit of a flying foe, and not a few officers joined in this opinion. But Nader knew his troops: the advantage gained was to be attributed in a great degree to that discipline and spirit of subordination which he had been at so much pains to instill; and he neither wished to risk any relaxation of habits so beneficial, nor the chance of a check, in pursuit of a brave and still formidable enemy, which might deprive him of the fruits of his hard-earned victory. Such were the reasons given to the Shah for his conduct, and no doubt they were the true ones. At all events, if there were others, none ventured to hint at them.

Early on the morrow, the army marched to Damghaun, where tidings having been received that Ashruff had called in all his detachments, and was retreating by the pass of Aheyaun, the army halted no longer than was necessary to secure the prisoners, and the baggage abandoned by the enemy—to collect and bestow its wounded men, and prepare for a strenuous pursuit.

Our loss was found to amount to near two thousand men: of the Affghauns, more than eight thousand were counted on the field, and we had

taken nearly three thousand prisoners; many others must have perished of their wounds, being unable to keep up with the rapid retreat of their friends, and falling into the hands of the exasperated peasantry.

Before we quitted our ground, Ibrahim Khan rode up to the guards, with whom I still kept my station, and informed me, that it was his brother the General's pleasure to continue me in command of the division I had led at the battle of Mehmandost; and we found, upon due enquiry, that after all casualties and losses sustained in that engagement, this division was reduced to just one half of its original strength.

By the time we reached Semnaun, information was received from the peasantry, that Ashruff, with the greater number of his troops, had reached the plains of Vuraumeen, which extend towards Tehran, but had left a strong detachment, under command of Urslan Khan, to dispute our passage through the defile of Sirderah, which is one of the principal passes towards Khorasan, and one through which his pursuers would necessarily be forced to march. His Highness would not, therefore, have halted at all at Semnaun, had not a breach unfortunately taken place between the Shah and himself, arising from his Majesty's weak but habitual jealousy. As unanimity was most desirable, if not absolutely indispensable to the success of under-

takings so important to the interests of the empire at large, his Highness thought fit to remain the greater part of two days in that city, in order to afford his Majesty time to clear the mirror of his soul from the clouds of displeasure. The temperate and judicious conduct of his Highness, succeeded in producing that effect; the Shah owned that he had been to blame, and rejoined the army at Semnaun, from whence it immediately marched to the fortified village of Soorkh Kallah. A long and fatiguing march carried us from thence to the plain of Khaur, and within a fursung of the gorge of the Sirderah pass.

Correct intelligence was here obtained of the dispositions which Urslan Khan had made for defending the defile. The slopes and summits of the mountains near its entrance were lined with matchlockmen; batteries were erected in commanding situations; and ambuscades, both of infantry and cavalry, had been posted to take advantage of the confusion which, no doubt, was anticipated from the fire which should be opened upon us as we advanced. But little knew the Affghaun chief with what a master in this description of warfare he had to contend; one, too, who was intimately acquainted with every foot of the ground, and could command every species of intelligence and guidance which the occasion might require.

The pass of Sirderah lies in a very narrow ravine, which winds for two fursungs through a tract of bare rocky hills; sometimes rising precipitously on either side; in other places, retreating into clefts and chasms well fitted for an ambush. A small stream runs in a deep bed at the bottom of this glen, the waters of which are so salt as to cover the ground and rocks in the neighbourhood with a saline powder, resembling hoar frost; and the whole scene is dreary and savage in a remarkable degree. The mountains which command the eastern and western gorges are of considerable elevation, and among these had the artillery of Urslan Khan been planted; but he never suspected that paths little known except to the villagers around, whose goats wander over them in search of food, pervade these mountains in every direction; and that by means of these his positions might easily be turned and surprised.

Selecting about six thousand men of tried courage and activity, his Highness divided them into two parties, and at the dead of night he led one of these himself up the steep and rocky hollows of the mountains to the right; while Tahmaseb Beg, an officer high in his confidence, performed the same duty on the left. Every man, even Nader himself, marched on foot, for no horses could have made their way where they had to go. Two other detachments were sent with trusty

guides, who had directions to lead them by a more extended circuit through certain subordinate ravines among the mountains, to occupy a position about half-way through the defile. The remainder of the cavalry and infantry, with all the artillery, under the command of Ibrahim Khan, were directed to show face to the enemy, as if it were their intention to attack his positions in front, but not to expose themselves to his fire, until signals from the heights should give notice that these were in possession of our troops.

The precision with which these complicated movements were executed, afforded the best proof of the state of practical discipline to which Nader had trained his army. At daylight in the morning, Ibrahim Khan advanced toward the gorge of the pass; but when the officers of Urslan, believing them to be the main body of the army, began to direct the fire of their batteries upon them, they were thunderstruck at finding themselves assailed by a shower of balls from the heights just above them; and seeing them crowded with soldiers in the act of rushing down upon them, with every advantage of ground in their favour, they abandoned their batteries, and fled to join their cavalry in the valley. Here again, however, they found themselves out-manœuvred; for the detachments of our troops, sent in advance, received them with a steady and destructive fire,

which threw them into irremediable disorder; and then pouring down upon them sword in hand, put many hundreds of them to death. Thus assailed in front and rear, the rout became general: Urslan Khan, with some of his bravest troops, cut his way through and joined his master at Vuraumeen; but the greater number of the rest, along with several officers of name, were either killed or taken prisoners.

When Ashruff learned the fate of this detachment, he immediately broke up his camp and fled towards Ispahan. He would not lose time or ground by passing through the city of Tehran, but dispatched a messenger with orders for the governor of that place to join him, with all his troops, on the march. These merciless savages, by way of a parting token, assembled the principal inhabitants, massacred them in cold blood, and then fled to join their chief. They could not, however, carry off their plunder and effects; and these, with a few of their number, who were unable to accompany the rest, fell a sacrifice to the rage of the inhabitants.

Anticipating the probability of some violence of this sort, his Highness, accompanied by the Shah, pushed forward with all possible expedition to Tehran; where, though they arrived too late to prevent the massacre, their presence tended greatly to restore confidence and tranquillity both to

the harassed city and the country around it. A multiplicity of business connected with the northern and western provinces of the empire, claimed attention in this place; and as his Highness observed that the presence of the Shah in camp, had a strong tendency to promote discontents and disorder among the troops, he took occasion to persuade his Majesty to remain at Tehran for the purpose of regulating the affairs of state, while he should pursue the enemy, and use all possible exertions to drive him from the capital and the country. In this arrangement, the Shah, suffering his royal mind to be convinced by the unanswerable arguments of his Highness, was graciously pleased to acquiesce; and attended by a guard of five or six thousand men, he continued to exercise the functions of royalty at Tehran.

The detachment of so considerable a body of troops did not weaken the real strength of the army; for, after the two decisive victories of Mehmandost and Sirderah, there was no want of recruits; on the contrary, the only difficulty was to make choice among those who offered, and select such only as promised to prove active and valiant soldiers. Before quitting Tehran, his Highness held a formal review of his troops, at which he took occasion to express his approbation of their conduct in general, and particularly in the late decisive engagement. He informed

the army that the Shah, at his solicitation, had granted to every man and officer a gratuity of one month's pay; and to every individual who had distinguished himself above others, he added presents corresponding with his rank and merits. When he reached the place where the division of his guards, still under my command, were stationed, he made a pause, and addressed me with a loud voice, "Ismael Beg, stand forth! with you I have a longer account to settle; and it is fit the chiefs and khans around me be witnesses to the manner in which I acquit myself of such an obligation. Your exertions at the battle of Mehmandost have not been overlooked; the chance of war imposed upon you an arduous duty, and you discharged it like a brave soldier. Had the division to which you belonged given way before the odds they were assailed by, the event of the day might have been very different, for on you did the fury of the enemy fall. Your individual courage and conduct supported the spirit of the men, and twice saved them when almost overwhelmed by superior numbers: and the sacred banner of your corps,—the banner of Nader's guards,—when in the utmost danger from the overpowering force of the foe, was preserved by the effort of your single hand, and borne, at the peril of your life, where it always should be seen, into the heart of the enemy's ranks. For

these good services, the Shah—(may Allah protect his sacred head!)—has been pleased to cast on you the eye of favour, and appoints you a Mimbashee in his service, with the rank of Khan. And, as I think you will be pleased to lead the brave men with whom you have hitherto served, I give you the command of a thousand of these my guards. Advance, Khan, and receive the khelut of your rank and office."

Prepared as I was to receive some mark of favour from his Highness, this extraordinary and public acknowledgment of my services utterly astonished and confounded me. In truth, I had not formed so high an estimate either of my efforts, or the importance of their success; I only knew that I had done my best to perform my duty. Confused and embarrassed, I dismounted and approached the General, and pressing his stirrup to my forehead, stammered out some incoherent words expressive of my gratitude and devotion. Nader turned to his brother with a smile: "If this lad fought no better than he speaks," said he, "how much might he be worth?"—"May the favour of your Highness increase!" replied I, recovering my composure on remarking the General's good-humour; "let your slave be judged by the rules of his trade: the Moojetehed* himself could not be justly blamed

* High priest.

should he fail in attempting to wield the sword or the spear; nor is the tongue always readiest when the heart is fullest. Should your Highness's service require the use of the pen rather than that of the sword, your slave will go to the Medressah, and learn the arts of logic and fine writing."—"Barik-illah! well answered: we can find Moollahs enough, however, without spoiling soldiers. But I am still in thy debt; thou hast lost thy horse in my service. I cannot restore thy old companion of the Desert; but here is a steed of no mean breed or value, take him, and love him, if thou canst, as well as Boorauk, and let him bear thee to gallant deeds, as gallantly as he did."—"May your servant long rejoice in the shadow of your greatness! he shall be freely risked as ever Boorauk was, did his value surpass that of the white mule of Allee, or the horse of the Prophet himself: the gratitude of your slave is unbounded as your beneficence!"

The attendants brought forward a noble charger of the true Desert breed, mingled with the noble blood of Nejed,* whose clean and powerful limbs, well-marked muscles, shining coat and bright glancing eye, proclaimed his spirit and his vigour. He was fitted with a superb set of silver-mounted harness, and the velvet-covered holsters were filled with a pair of handsome pistols, the work of some

* A district of Arabia, where the finest Arab horses are bred.

artist of Frangestan. I gazed on the splendid present with delight, yet a pang of distress thrilled to my heart as I remembered the price it had cost me. The cloud that passed over my brow was caught by the eagle eye of Nader: "See," said he, "the silly boy is still thinking of his wild Tekeh steed, or his wild Toorkoman life. Well! the time has been when I too would have looked grave at the loss of a favorite horse. What, man! it is the fate of war, and cannot be helped. Mount and away! take charge of your command, and let me see you this evening at the Durkhaneh!"—I obeyed, and with a low obeisance withdrew to my post.

CHAPTER IV.

RECOVERY OF THE CAPITAL.

Next morning the army commenced its march for Ispahan; and as the Shah had expressed extreme anxiety for the deliverance of his capital from the hands of the bloodthirsty savages who possessed it, his Highness made all possible dispatch, consistent with due precautions, to reach that place and meet the enemy. But delays, inseparable from the arrangement of much business, and the march of so large an army, accompanied with its artillery and stores, occupied so many days, that Ashruff and his Affghauns, who consulted nothing but their own safety, had reached Ispahan long before the troops of his Highness arrived in its vicinity. Whether the usurper now felt that the star of his fortunes was declining, and came to the resolution of preparing for the evil day by accumulating as much property as he could; or whether he acted merely from a wanton

spirit of malice, and in revenge for the reverses he had met with, it is not easy to determine; but the moment he arrived in the capital, he sent his soldiers into all the bazaars, and plundered these and the houses of private persons, driving away the owners, and massacring all they met with, to the amount of many thousands: among these were a number of men remarkable for piety or learning, who, tempted by the comparative security which had been enjoyed in the early part of Ashruff's reign, had returned to the capital, or flocked to it from other places.

Having executed this diabolical atrocity, he collected the greater part of his troops fit for service, and deposited all his plunder, along with the women and children, in the strong fort which had been built by the Affghauns at Ispahan. In this he left a garrison sufficient to defend it against all sudden assaults; and resolving to make another desperate struggle for his existence and his crown, he marched out to the neighbourhood of Moortchacoor, a village on the road from Ispahan, to await the arrival of his enemy.

Sensible how much depended on the stand he should be able to make before Ispahan, the Affghaun monarch omitted no means of strengthening his hands on every quarter; nor could he have assembled a force sufficient to meet the victorious troops of Khorasan, had he not succeeded

in obtaining assistance from the Turks at Hamadan, and in enlisting a number of Persians, discontented traitors, who in hopes of sharing in the plunder of their country's capital, were content to join with a rebel usurper who was destroying her very existence.

It was on the 12th of November that the advanced guard of his Highness approached the outposts of the Affghaun army. A troop of Koords on that day fell in with, and attacked a party of Affghauns, of whom they killed a good many, and made prisoners of others, from whom information was obtained of the arrangements and strength of the enemy. Ashruff, now more prudent than formerly, resolved no more to stake the fortune of the day upon a single charge, which bitter experience had taught him might fail; but, taking a lesson from the more successful tactics of his enemy, he drew up his troops in a single compact body, upon an eminence which rose from the plain with a sharp acclivity in front, and surrounded them with cannon and intrenchments. Thus posted, he determined to await the charge of the troops of Khorasan.

At daylight on the morning of the 13th, his Highness, who had passed the night under arms with his troops, in order of battle,—when he observed the strength of the enemy's position, and the steepness of the ground in its front, began

the action by attempting to turn their flank and attack them from the side of Ispahan, in hopes by this manœuvre to draw them down into the plain. But Ashruff felt and kept his advantage, so that our brave troops had nothing left to trust to for victory but God and their valour. The matchlock-men, with the camel and carriage artillery, were now ordered to advance and storm the intrenchments; and the steadiness with which they charged up to the very guns of their enemies, under a heavy and murderous fire, was a surprising proof of the influence which his Highness had gained over the minds of his soldiers, and of the power of that discipline which he had established. Numbers dropped in their ranks, dashed to pieces by the cannon balls, or pierced with musket shot, as we moved swiftly on; but there was no wavering in the line, nor was a single shot fired until we had reached within forty or fifty paces of the enemy. At that time the signal was given, and a heavy fire was instantly poured in with the most deliberate aim, and such effect, that the foremost rank of the enemy seemed totally swept away.

The determined coolness of our men, and the terrible effects of this volley, so astonished and disconcerted the Affghauns, that they wavered and began to fly:—the gunners deserted their guns, and the matchlock-men threw down their pieces. The keen eye of Nader saw the favour-

able moment, and his voice, ordering the charge, was immediately heard from the rear, where he had gone to bring up reinforcements:—that voice was never heard in vain: the troops pushed forward, cut down the few Affghauns who remained by their guns, and put the rest to flight.

But Ashruff, who saw this misfortune, and whose natural courage was augmented by the hazard of his situation, resolved upon a desperate effort to recover the day. His cavalry was yet unbroken, and, dispatching the principal part of it to repel that of his Highness, which was now in motion to disperse the flying infantry, he headed a chosen body of two thousand men, whose orders were to seek no other object than the person of Nader Koolee, and to spare no sacrifice to take him dead or alive. The moment was favourable for the execution of such an exploit, and at one time the attempt stood no small chance of success. The whole of the infantry were engaged in routing and pursuing the flying Affghauns, and the greater part of the cavalry had gone to support them, or were hotly engaged with that of the enemy, while his Highness, surrounded only by a few officers and gholaums, had remained a little in the rear, to watch the turns of the battle. It was then that this select band, making a small and unexpected circuit, cut its way through the skirts of a feeble line of infantry, and came thundering down upon

his Highness and his party. From the nature of the ground, and the dust of the battle, this movement could not be observed until the moment of its execution, while the commanding position occupied by Ashruff, enabled him to see and seize the exact time for his attempt.

Fortunately some corps of cavalry still remained on their stations, and among others that which I commanded, which was intended as a reserve. Anxious for the success of our squadrons, which were just closing with those of the enemy, I was following their course with my eyes, when loud shouts, and the thunder of many hoofs on the left, struck upon my ear, and through the clouds of smoke and dust I saw the dim gleaming of a heavy compact body bearing down upon our flank. Instantly comprehending that it was an attack upon a point where there was no force to repel it,—in the absence of any general-officer, I called on the guard to follow me, and sent off for farther assistance. The lightning is not more swift than was our charge, yet we were barely in time. The Affghauns, disregarding the feeble efforts of the few assailants who, hearing their approach, had turned to repel it, had borne right onward, and enveloped the little party of his Highness, who were fighting desperately against unnumbered odds, determined at least to sell their lives as dear as possible. The battle-axe of Nader was streaming with gore, and

a heap of dead and wounded at his feet, declared how well he had wielded it; nor had the swords of his attendants been idle, for all of them bore marks of their resolution to defend or die with their chief. But the struggle was too unequal; several of his few friends had already fallen, and all would soon have been over, when the shouts of our advancing party rang in the ears of the Affghauns, and the unexpected impetuosity of our charge penetrated in a moment through the crowd, even to the centre of the bloody ring where Nader and his followers stood at bay. This unlooked-for succour staggered the enemy, who began to fall thickly under our blows: not that they yet abandoned their object; on the contrary, recovering from their surprise, they rallied and attacked us with the most determined fury; nor was it until large reinforcements of cavalry came up, and a party of matchlock-men, who formed in their rear, began to gall them severely with their shot, that they showed any disposition to retreat. But it was then too late; the rout of their friends was now general, and they were separated from the fugitives. The greater number was cut to pieces on the spot; and Ashruff, attended by four or five hundred men, capitally armed and mounted, with difficulty cut his way through our ranks, and escaped. The battle was over an hour before noon; and by three o'clock of the same day the bulk of

the fugitives reached Ispahan, a distance of thirty miles. Ashruff, with the mangled remains of his chosen party, did not reach the city for several hours after.

When we had time to breathe, and to see what friends were safe, I turned with anxiety to the General, who was covered with blood. "How! Ismael again!" said he: "always the friend in need! Well, I owe you a good turn for this: demand it when you will, you need not fear refusal." —"But your Highness is hurt?"—"No," replied he, with a grim smile, "rebel villains, vermin such as these, were never born to draw the blood of Nader Koolee—fear not for him!" I had not escaped so well. A severe cut on my shoulder, and a shot through the muscles of my thigh, gave me reason to remember the battle of Moortchacoor.

The result of this battle decided the fate of Ashruff. He had now no choice—no safety but in flight. The crown had fallen from his head, the sceptre of empire had mouldered from his grasp. He felt this; and the moment he reached Ispahan he commenced his arrangements for quitting it for ever. But as it was not in the nature of a barbarian like Ashruff, exasperated as he had been by so mortifying a reverse, to abstain from deeds of cruelty while yet in his power to perpetrate them, he resolved to crown his bloody career by an act as atrocious as unnecessary. The

unfortunate Shah Hoossain, whose meekness and piety had disarmed the cruelty even of the fierce and sullen Meer Mahmood, when he slew more than thirty of that monarch's children, now fell a victim to the fury of a worse barbarian. Seeking the retreat in which the wretched monarch had lived since his dethronement, the tyrant butchered him and the few remaining male branches of the royal family in cold blood, and dragged away their daughters and the other females of the royal household along with him as captives. There is every reason to believe that he intended to complete the sum of his crimes by another indiscriminate massacre of the inhabitants of Ispahan, but that he dreaded being surprised by the victorious army while his soldiers were thus employed. Certain it is, that he omitted no means for securing his retreat, and lost no time in escaping from the vengeance which he believed to be pursuing him. Dreading the molestation and obstruction which the enraged people might be disposed to offer to a beaten and flying foe, he pretended to have gained a great victory over the troops of Khorasan, and ordered rejoicings accordingly; but the anxious and alarmed faces of their tyrants, as they hurried from the field of disaster, the numbers of the wounded, and the cries and wailings which arose from the women, belied all his assertions; and the extraordinary bustle of

preparation which ensued, quickly led the inhabitants to guess the truth. Night no sooner came on, than, loading their mules and camels with the richest part of the plunder, and placing on them their women and children, the Affghauns silently quitted the city. Of their whole force not more than twelve thousand souls are said to have thus fled from Ispahan: the shattered remains of those conquerors, who, bursting like a torrent over Persia, laid desolate her cities, reduced her fairest provinces to a desert, and overwhelmed the land with a flood of ruin and misery, which ages will hardly serve to repair.

While these scenes were going on, Nader remained quietly encamped on the field he had won. What the reasons of his Highness might be for omitting to follow up his victory and pursue the Affghauns to Ispahan, I am unable to say.—He permitted neither interference nor enquiry in matters where he was sole judge, nor were his officers accustomed to pry into his councils. Doubtless so wise and great a captain would never have foregone so obvious an advantage without especial cause; and we, content to execute his commands, seldom gave ourselves the unnecessary trouble of examining into their motives.

When the inhabitants of Ispahan discovered that their oppressors had really fled, they issued from the concealments to which terror had driven

them; and gathering fury from the remembrance of the injuries they had sustained, hurried over the place, searching for, and slaughtering without mercy, such Affghauns as were found yet lingering behind, and endeavouring to indemnify themselves for the losses they had sustained, by seizing all the booty they could lay hold of. The peasants, too, with all sorts of marauders from the neighbourhood, flocked to the city, and joined in the pillage; so that for two days Ispahan was a scene of the most shameless violence and confusion, resembling rather a city stormed and given up to plunder, than one from which an enemy had just been driven. At length the few remaining persons of respectability and consideration without the walls, sent a deputation to his Highness, entreating him to interfere and take measures for terminating such disgraceful outrages; and it was not until this solicitation arrived, that his Highness sent a detachment of two thousand Koords and Affshars, commanded by Allee Koolee Khan Ahmedloo, with orders to disperse the rioters and restore tranquillity, while he himself moved more leisurely towards the city.

On the 19th day of November, six days after the battle of Moortchacoor, Nader, accompanied by his principal officers, his gholaums, guards, and part of his army, entered the capital. There were few among us who could behold without

emotion this great and ancient city, denominated "half the world" by its proud inhabitants,—the seat of royalty,—the favoured abode of the great Abbas, and all the mighty monarchs of the Suffavean line. When we remembered how long it had groaned under the yoke of a barbarous usurper; how much of cruelty and misery had been inflicted upon its inhabitants; how much of sacred and of royal blood had been spilled within its walls; and when we saw ourselves the fortunate instruments, under Providence, of banishing its tyrants, and restoring the blessings of peace and security to its diminished population, we might surely be forgiven if our hearts swelled with pride and exultation. Sick and wounded as I was, I never shall forget the delight with which I gazed upon its domes and minarets as they slowly rose to view; the endless extent of walls, habitations, and gardens, that spread over the almost boundless plain in which it stands; and the thickly clustered villages around it, now indeed chiefly ruined, and destitute of inhabitants, by plunder, exactions, and massacres. In passing through the city, I was unable at the time to remark much beyond the interminable length of its noble bazaars, grand and imposing, though empty, and abounding in traces of plunder and violence. The splendid Maidaun Shahee, and glittering cluster of palaces, with their noble and lofty entrance,

the Alee Capee gate, were visions of magnificence which had not even visited my dreams; but I could not enjoy their splendour then: the pain of my wounds was severe, and I was glad to retire to my quarters, in the long range of buildings within the Alee Capee gate, which are assigned to officers about the royal person.

After his Highness had been some days settled in the city, and had dispatched the most urgent business on his hands, he held a grand review of his army, causing an exact account to be taken of its numbers, and examining with minute attention into the wants and general condition of the soldiers. He exacted a strict account of all plunder taken from the enemy; and having ascertained, and caused to be collected together all the treasure and property which they had left behind, he distributed magnificent presents in money, horses, and goods, to every officer and soldier in his service, besides paying them up all arrears of pay. These measures increased his popularity and influence with the troops, who, thus finding their own comfort and interest identified with the extension of his conquests and his glory, became more zealous in his service.

The condition of my wounds, which threatened serious consequences, prevented me from being at my post at this review; but I exerted myself to be present at the durbar of officers held in the evening. It was a brilliant and an interesting

sight. As the deputy and representative of majesty, his Highness caused the magnificent hall of the Chehl-Sittoon* to be prepared for his reception; its glittering pillars were reflected in the clear canal which extended in front; and the numberless mirrors that adorn its walls, its roof, and its ornamental arched niches, multiplied a thousandfold the thronged and gay assembly which filled its spacious area.

Every officer in the army who claimed a right to stand in the presence of his General, felt it a duty to attend, and to add to the splendour of this solemn display, by appearing in his richest apparel, or accoutred in his most brilliant armour; and many there were among them, whose sunken countenances and bandaged limbs gave testimony to the share they had borne in the conflicts which had terminated so successfully and honourably. The few nobles and men in office, of whatever description, who remained in the city, contributed to its effect by the beauty and variety of their more peaceful costumes; and shawls, furs, gold, silver, and jewels, were produced in far greater abundance than could have been looked for in a city that had been so harassed and plundered as Ispahan.

I will not attempt to describe the ceremonial of this splendid court. The gracious demeanour of his Highness shed the sunshine of happiness over

* The "palace of the forty pillars."

every bosom; each individual believed himself to have been especially distinguished by the compliment or encomium addressed to him, and quitted the presence more gratified by this coveted approbation, than by the rich gifts that were bestowed upon him. Few were the exceptions to this general satisfaction; for few were there among the officers of Nader's army deficient in courage or in zeal. Nor was this an occasion on which he thought it fit to exercise his customary severity; a coldness of address, or a pointed sarcasm were the severest rebukes he bestowed. As the smile of approbation shone with a warmer ray on those who, like myself, bore tokens of hard service, "Yes, gentlemen, and faithful servants," would he say, "I respect the paleness of your countenances, for they wore another hue upon the field of battle; but some there are whose cheeks only burn with the glow of assurance in the Dewan-khaneh, and blush at the sight of an enemy; whose tongues can storm in their anderoons,* but quail into silence at the roar of a conflict. The sight of a brave man is ever grateful to Nader, and right welcome is the zeal which brought you, notwithstanding the smart of your wounds, into his presence this evening. But the zeal of some can lead them to no higher exertion, and cools when duty most requires its energy:—Ismael, my friend, it is

* Private apartments.

not so with thee. The fortune of war placed thy master in jeopardy, and it is but an act of justice to declare before these assembled officers, that he owed his safety principally to thy intrepidity and zeal. Thou wilt not find thyself forgotten; but now retire:—see to thy health; the flush which begins to glow on thy cheek, and glisten in thine eye, betokens danger: thou hast thy leave—farewell!" Blushing as much from confusion as from the fever, which by this time was thrilling through my veins, I bowed profoundly, and left the presence, followed by many a glance of mingled curiosity and envy.

But though his Highness was unwilling to disturb the harmony of this august assembly, or of the splendid fêtes which followed in honour of his signal successes, he speedily resumed the accustomed rigour of his discipline, and commenced in earnest to reform such abuses as had not failed to make their appearance during the bustle of a campaign, and in the multiplicity of business connected with so extensive an achievement as the recovery of the capital of the empire. Not that glaring instances of misconduct were at any period suffered to pass unnoticed;—on the contrary, summary chastisement was in such cases generally inflicted, and instances of this speedy justice were of frequent occurrence. At the battle of Moortchacoor, when the Affghauns, abandoning their camp, began to fly, some Toorkomans of a certain

tribe notoriously given to thieving, gave way to their base propensity; and, while their brother soldiers were sacrificing their blood to disperse and defeat the enemy, they commenced a general pillage, selecting for their booty the richest and most valuable articles to be found. They loaded themselves with gold and silver utensils, splendid cloaks, and the finest furs, and were making dispositions to secrete their plunder, when, unfortunately for them, they were observed by certain gholaums, who, enraged at the idea that such wretches should carry off a prize for which others were risking their lives, informed the General of it directly after the battle. The wrath of Nader was kindled; he ordered the culprits before him, and after sternly upbraiding them with their treacherous rapacity, directed that the booty they had taken should be produced in presence of the army, and returned to the general depot of captured goods, and that they themselves should be beheaded in front of the pile. This sentence was rigidly executed upon some, but the boon of mercy was graciously extended to the rest, who, after being well bastinadoed, had their ears cut off by the hands of the executioners, and were turned out of camp.

When order was restored to the city, a proclamation was issued, enjoining the strictest attention to discipline and regularity of conduct upon the

troops, and denouncing the severest punishments upon such as should be found transgressing. Yet though rigid in exacting obedience, there were instances in which his sagacity and knowledge of human nature induced him to yield to circumstances, and pardon or overlook an offence rather than disgust or dishearten his soldiers by an unbending and ill-timed adherence to rules.

After the battle of Moortchacoor, a petty noble, who resided in a village not far from the field, came hurrying to the camp; and craving an audience with the General, complained in bitter terms that certain of the troops had come to his village after the engagement, forcibly entered and plundered his house, and insulted his women in the harem; and he added with much intemperance of abuse, that after receiving such affronts, and having his honour thus sullied, he could no longer submit to live. "I do not think you ought," replied Nader coolly, after having heard him to an end, and immediately gave orders that the man should be strangled. He afterwards explained his reasons for a conduct apparently so cruel and inconsistent: "Who," said he, "can at all times hold victorious troops under perfect restraint? A few instances of moderate punishment will effect nothing; and were we to act with rigid severity towards every offender, we should break the spirits and cool the zeal which is so indispensable to bear an army to victory.

That fellow was a paltry, double-faced villain, who, by truckling to whatever power was uppermost, succeeded in keeping possession of his property even under the rule of the Affghauns. The men he accused were among the bravest of my troops: better a thousand such miserable reptiles should perish, than that the country should lose the services of so many gallant soldiers, when most required. Besides, were I to give ear to every complaint of such a nature during a campaign, my time would be occupied in punishing my soldiers, rather than in leading them to conquer the king's enemies."

But whilst those who comprehended the full scope of Nader's policy, were more than ever cautious to offend, there were others, who, thoughtless and shallow themselves, presumed upon a blindness or a lenity of which they did not understand the motives, and which they vainly imagined was intended exclusively to favour the brave and the daring. My old comrade, Fouje Allee, was one of those who, unfortunately for himself, laboured under this delusion: he held his own ferocious and heedless courage to be a sufficient excuse for all possible irregularities, in the eyes of Nader. It is true, he had escaped better than he deserved, out of several scrapes into which his debauched and extravagant habits had led him; and he was rash

enough, even after the proclamation was formally published, to make his way by force into the harem of a distinguished merchant in the bazaar, and to carry off his wife, whom he had accidentally seen, and by whose beauty he had been captivated. A complaint was immediately lodged by the distracted husband, and there was no sort of difficulty in identifying the culprit, who rather gloried in, than concealed the outrage he had committed, boasting that his was not the master to put the impertinent fancies of a paltry cloth and sugar-seller, in competition with the services and pleasure of a brave soldier like himself. "What!" cried Nader, in rising fury, and bending on the culprit a withering frown, "is the rascal blockhead enough to suppose that his willingness to run his head against a wall can entitle him to abuse and insult at his will and pleasure the peaceful subjects of the king? Such an ass does not deserve to live, even had he not audaciously transgressed our published commands, which, as one of our own servants, he should have been the most scrupulous to observe; but we shall make him an example to all such insolent fools in future." The unhappy man would have remonstrated and entreated; but it was in vain, for Nader, when once decided in his own mind, never listened to argument or solicitation. He was executed that evening, being blown

from a mortar in the Maidaun Shahee, in presence of a multitude of the citizens, as well as of many of the troops assembled for the occasion.

In little more than a month after the recovery of the capital, Shah Tahmaseb, who had been informed of the fortunate event by his Highness's couriers, arrived at Ispahan. Nader, attended by his officers, and a part of his guards, advanced to Gez, twelve miles from the city, to welcome and escort the monarch to the once splendid, though now dilapidated seat of his ancestors.

When the General came near, his Majesty, alighting from his horse, advanced towards him with the most gracious air; upon which his Highness immediately threw himself from his charger, and running forward, remonstrated with his Majesty on this excessive condescension to the humblest of his slaves, which he feared might be misinterpreted by the beholders. "Can the Shah show too much honour to the man who has replaced him on his throne, and bound the crown of his ancestors around his head?" said the monarch in a loud voice. "Let all men know that the Shah acknowledges his obligations, and be witnesses to his gratitude." Nader had by this time kneeled humbly down before the Shah, who thus continued: "Let the Khan exalted in dignity and in valour arise—We constitute and appoint him ruler and governor over Khorasan, the

wide province which was first delivered from its insolent invaders by his valiant arm;—and we bestow upon him our own—the royal name:—let him henceforth be called Tahmaseb Koolee Khan!" The air was rent with acclamations as this gracious decree was published by the royal officers; and his Highness arose with a profound obeisance, after humbly kissing the hem of the royal robe, while the King stretched forth his hand to receive the salute, and to raise from the posture of humility the hero to whom he was indebted for his safety and his throne.

The Shah's entrance into Ispahan was marked with all the pomp and splendour that could be lavished on it. The troops, with their officers, attended in their gayest array, and the people lined the streets and bazaars as the procession passed, and rent the air with shouts of joy, as their well-beloved prince, the son and rightful heir of the good Shah Hoossein, returned to his capital and to his throne. Oxen were sacrificed as he passed, and sweetmeats in abundance were thrown under the feet of the royal charger, as proudly and leisurely he stepped along under direction of the astrologers, to cross the threshold of the gate at the fortunate moment. There was a demur and a dispute, it is true, between these learned men, regarding the exact time of this lucky period; and some affirmed that

it was suffered to elapse while they contended about the matter. This may have been the case, for it is certain that the subsequent fate of this weak monarch was none of the most fortunate; but with this at present I have nothing to do.

In spite of all this splendour, and notwithstanding all the attention which was bestowed upon restoring, as much as might be, the former appearance of ease and prosperity to the city, the Shah failed not to observe the sad traces of devastation which could not all at once be removed, as well as the comparatively scanty population, the ill-filled shops, the many ruined houses; and he sighed as he passed along, in spite of the enthusiastic welcome of his people, and the flattering auspices under which he now revisited his capital. But when he reached the palace of his ancestors, the magnificent home of his youth, and recollected the melancholy fate of his father and all his family, whose unrevenged blood still cried out for vengeance; when he saw the fresh traces of their murderers, and the marks of their savage rapacity in the bare and dismantled halls of his palaces; his successes and his triumph were forgotten,—his softer feelings overcame him,—he covered his face and wept.

I was not in a condition to be present on this solemn occasion; but I learned from several eye-

witnesses that the scene was impressive and affecting beyond description. Nor did the painful interest stop here; the monarch was destined to receive many another pang in the course of this his first visit to the ancient abode of his family. One circumstance alone occurred to soften the bitterness of tortured feeling, and excite a mournful pleasure in the breast of the agitated king. Of the multitude which once had crowded the courts and chambers of the royal harem, there now remained but a few aged slaves, whom the Affghauns had left to their fate, and who performed the menial duties of keeping it in order. As the king with a full heart moved through the extensive suites of apartments, now stripped of their gorgeous furniture, all bare and desolate, one of these old slaves rushed forward, and threw her arms about his neck in a passionate transport of joy. It was his mother!—who, ever since the conquest of the Affghauns, had contrived to conceal herself from their observation in the disguise of a slave, and had submitted to all the offices of drudgery, and all the hardships attendant on such a situation, in hopes of one day witnessing the fall of her enemies and the restoration of her family to their dignities and honours. She had endured the weight of one misfortune after another: the murder of the family, with many of her own children; separation from her royal lord and the

remaining members of his house; and finally, his death, and the abduction of all who yet survived belonging to him. But she knew that her son, her eldest-born, the Prince Tahmaseb, had escaped from the destroyer; and she hoped and faithfully believed that he should one day repay upon his foes the bitter portion they had forced upon his house; and in that hope she had steadily and patiently endured all the scorn and misery of her fate. She now reaped her reward; she had found her son, and saw him once more in possession of the supreme power, and adorned with those symbols of authority which had belonged to his royal father, but which could not, alas! save him from the decree of immutable destiny.

CHAPTER V.

SEQUEL TO THE YOUNG MERCHANT'S STORY.

THE exertions I had made to discharge some duties of consequence, previous to the review and Durbar of which I have spoken above, together with the agitation produced by what had occurred on that occasion, had so serious an effect upon my health, that my wounds began to inflame, and the consequence was a fever, which not only confined me to bed, but put my life in great danger. During the intervals of mental wanderings and delirium which it occasioned, my attention was feebly awakened to a degree of comfort about me, greatly exceeding that which I could command, or which falls to the lot of a soldier: the carpets and furniture around me were of a finer fabric than my own, my couch was softer and ampler, and when I called for something to quench my burning thirst, they brought to me the finest-flavoured and most cooling sherbets. More than

one domestic, of whose face I had no knowledge, administered to my wants; and a physician with a grave face and huge grey turban, came frequently to enquire regarding my health.

I was too weak to make much enquiry on the subject, although this change had been remarked by me for some time; and the half-expressed queries which, after a while, I did put to the attendants, were replied to in a way to soothe, but not to satisfy my curiosity. As the fever abated, however, and mental energy began to revive with the first dawnings of returning health, I insisted upon being informed from whence these luxuries were derived, and to whom I was indebted for the care and attention with which I found myself treated. The reply was, that a friend, much interested in my welfare, had provided them; that he called very frequently; and during the time when my life was in danger he had been constantly near me, not leaving the house for days and nights together. I was informed that I should soon have a visit from this kind friend, who had only waited till my restored health made it safe for me to introduce himself in person. I wearied myself with conjectures as to who this well-wisher of mine could be, nor could I enjoy any rest until the hour which was to satisfy my curiosity. At length the bustle of an arrival was heard, the approach of my friend was announced, and, as the door opened, my lan-

guid eyes fell upon the features of the young merchant, Meerza Aboo Talib, to whose generous kindness I had already been so deeply indebted during my first visit to Mushed. A faint exclamation of delight escaped me, and his own mild and gracious countenance was lighted up with a smile of pleasure, as he approached and gave me joy of my convalescence. "You know not, my dear Ismael,' said he, "how many painful apprehensions I have had on your account, and how anxiously I have waited for the moment when I might prudently make myself known to my friend. But you mus not speak," continued he, observing me about to address him; "you are forbid to talk; and should know too well the danger of agitation, to disobey the orders of the learned Hakeems who attend you."

"Excellent friend! most kind Aboo Talib!" exclaimed I faintly, in spite of his caution—"I shall only say that Providence, in you, has sent me a blessing of which I am unworthy, but which is more welcome than water in the desert to the dying traveller. May Allah preserve you! and render me worthy of your friendship!"

"Hush! my friend, do not agitate yourself thus, or I must quit you at once. If you will but be calm, I shall sit by you awhile, and, in order to allay the curiosity which I see you are tormented with, I will tell you how I discovered you to be in

Ispahan; hereafter, I hope we may converse with less restraint.

"When our Affghaun oppressors had fled from the city in consternation, and the disgusting scenes of anarchy and outrage which succeeded their precipitate retreat had been checked by the arrival of your General's troops, the few peaceable and terrified inhabitants who remained in concealment, ventured forth from their hiding-places,—many of them to witness the utter ruin which had overtaken them by the pillage of their property in the bazaar. I was myself among the sufferers, though comparatively in a small degree, for you know that the sources and extent of my wealth are little liable to be affected by the miscarriage of any adventure, or the loss of any portion which I ever choose to risk, and, thanks be to Allah! the repositories of my treasure are too well concealed to be liable to detection, however minute may be the search.

"On the morning after the grand review, I repaired to the Dur-khaneh, in hopes of procuring an audience either with his Highness or some of his principal officers, on some business relating to the recovery of my stolen merchandize, which I had traced, as I believed, to the robbers who carried it off. I had attended there more than once before, but the press of business was so great, that I could not obtain any notice; nor was I more

fortunate on this occasion; but while waiting patiently in the antichamber, I heard an earnest conversation regarding the signal marks of favour bestowed by his highness the General upon a certain Ismael Khan, an officer of the body-guard.—Ismael Khan!—I was struck with the name, for it was that which was borne by my friend in Mushed; but the bustle of events that have elapsed since we parted, had confounded my memory, and I could not recollect in what capacity you had served the General. I was puzzled also with the *Khan*, and the name is so common that it might be borne by many besides my friend. Yet I remembered his high promise: something stirring in my bosom seemed to tell me that I was not mistaken—that the man who by his address and gallantry had extorted a tribute of admiration from the rigid Nader, was not unlikely to acquire the honourable distinction of nobility. I hastened to enquire who this young hero might be; and the result was a conviction that it was in truth the very Ismael whose frank and generous bearing had won my friendship in Mushed. Need I tell you how powerfully this intelligence excited me? how ardently I longed to meet you, and to renew the pleasant intercourse that subsisted there between us?

"I lost not a moment in discovering your abode; but was informed, on reaching it, that you were confined to bed, and too unwell to see any one. Un-

willing to disturb you at such a time, I retired, and repeated my visit the next day, when, finding that you were rather worse than better, I made myself known to old Cossim, who was overjoyed at recognizing me, and who most zealously promoted the arrangements I proposed making for your comfort. Many an anxious day has since gone by while we almost despaired of your life; and many an hour have I watched, unseen by you, the flushings of your fevered cheek, and shuddered with terror at the heavy moans and wild wandering sentences which, every now and then, would burst from your parched lips."

"I have been a sad charge to you, my kind friend," said I, unable to contain myself; "but this is not the first time you have suffered vexation on my account, unworthy and luckless as I am, how can I ever requite you for your goodness!"—"By being silent and tranquil, and taking care of yourself," returned he, "and not undoing what has cost us so much anxiety to achieve, by indulging your natural impatience. Believe me, that all the uneasiness I may have suffered will be more than repaid by seeing you restored to health, and fit to resume the high career which doubtless lies before you. It is not now you are to learn the affection I bear you; and I can assure you that such sentiments could never have been excited in my breast, had I not discerned, among the weeds of thought-

lessness and dissipation that sprang up in your heart, the blossoms of a noble and energetic mind, pregnant with enthusiasm, with feeling, and with honour. My prognostics have not been false; you have seen the error of your ways; you have re-entered the path of virtue and honour; and having experienced the comfort of such a course, I am persuaded you will never more depart from it."—I was too weak to attempt a reply to these kind sayings of my friendly Aboo Talib, who took his leave soon after, promising to pay me a longer visit on the morrow.

In the course of a few more days, my health was sufficiently re-established to allow of unrestrained conversation, and to enable me to quit my couch; and Aboo Talib insisted upon removing me to his own house, where, he said, my comfort could be better attended to. When able to bear the motion, and strong enough to profit by change of air, he carried me in a tucht-e-rowan* to a delightful garden which he possessed in a village near Ispahan, where, though the season denied us the enjoyment of country pleasures, I experienced a salutary and agreeable change. The wind sighed, indeed, through the leafless branches of the chinars and tall poplars, and the rose-bushes were stripped of their foliage as well as their blossoms, nor did the bulbul court with her sweet

* A litter borne by mules.

melancholy song the withered flowers among which she used to linger in the balmy evenings of spring: yet the symmetrical regularity of the garden pleased the eye, while its saddened hues were in harmony with the chastened enthusiasm of a youthful mind, softened as mine was by ill health and the reflections it occasioned. Within doors the bright glow of a blazing wood-fire tempered the rigour of the chill evenings, and my friend would frequently provide against their dulness by the company of some agreeable friends whom he brought together to meet me.

Several weeks elapsed in these calm enjoyments, but before one had gone by, my friend and I had mutually related all that had occurred to us since the time of our separation. I will not dwell upon the poignant feelings of humiliation and shame with which I acknowledged to this generous friend the lengths I had gone in folly and wickedness, and reproached myself for the thoughtless manner in which I had abused his confiding liberality and despised his often repeated advice. Whenever I came upon the subject, he stopped me short—"Let us hear no more of this, my dear Ismael:—a mist in those days overhung your better judgment, and the very excesses into which you were hurried, have wrought their own cure; you have seen your errors, and are disgusted by

vice; it has been a cheap outlay for so valuable a result—how, then, can I but rejoice at it?"

It was a matter of much satisfaction to me, that the influence I possessed in the General's family, enabled me to render material aid to my friend, in the arrangement of his business at court; and by means of the assistance I procured for him, he succeeded in recovering great part of the valuable goods of which he had been plundered after the flight of the Affghauns from Ispahan. I will now relate the substance of what befel his wife, the beautiful Zoolfah, after she was carried from his house in Ispahan, as has been described in the first part of the young merchant's story; and I give it as much as possible in his own words.

"On the evening when I was so unluckily induced to leave my house in search of food, my unfortunate wife remained in the most painful anxiety, listening for the slightest sound, until, hearing a noise in the outer apartments, which she believed to be occasioned by my return, in her impatience she imprudently went forth to meet me, and was seen, pursued, and carried off by the wretches who had entered the house in search of very different prey.

"The youth and beauty of Zoolfah, and the rich ornaments she wore, convinced her captors that she must belong to a wealthy family. The

prize was too valuable to be trusted within the gripe of Mahmood, so it was resolved to send her off immediately to Komeishah, which was the head-quarters of Nasser Oollah's troops. Accordingly, disregarding her tears and cries, as well as her repeated assertions that she was a married woman, and that her husband would ransom her at any sum they might demand, they muffled her up in a cloak, and placing her behind one of his officers, dispatched her to Komeishah, escorted by a party of twelve or fifteen Affghauns.

"The road to that town passes near to Ben Ispahan, a small town, which, by its spirited conduct during the contest with the Affghauns, had afforded a striking contrast to the pusillanimous supineness of the capital. The inhabitants of this little place, which was very imperfectly fortified, arming themselves as best they could, opposed successfully every effort of the enemy to obtain possession of their town. They submitted neither to assessment nor voluntary contribution, and were so far from betraying any symptoms of alarm, that they invariably put to death, without respect of persons, all prisoners who fell into their hands in the sallies and attacks with which they harassed their enemies; and such was the dread entertained by the Affghauns for the brave peasants of Ben Ispahan, that long after the capital had fallen into their power, the conquerors

were glad to grant them very favourable and honourable terms of capitulation, which they were too fearful of consequences ever to infringe.

"The dreadful scenes which were passing in the capital, and the apprehension of a like attempt at treachery on the part of Meer Mahmood, had at this time, however, so far excited the suspicion of the Ben-Ispahanites, that they kept a very jealous watch within their walls, and sent forth parties every night to watch against any hostile movement which might be set on foot against them by the Affghauns of the capital. The soldiers who were escorting my wife, on their way to Komeishah, fell in with one of these patroles, and, being irritated at the questions which were put to them, replied sharply and haughtily. A scuffle ensued, and Zoolfah, catching hope from the fray, contrived to tear off some of her mufflings, and called for help in the name of God, exclaiming that she was a Persian woman forcibly carried off from her husband. The officer behind whom she was seated, did all in his power to silence her cries; but the brave villagers, on hearing her exclamations of distress, set upon the Affghauns, struck down the officer, beat many of his men from their horses, and carried them, along with my wife, into Ben Ispahan.

"So soon as Zoolfah had related her story, she met with the greatest possible kindness; and the

Ketkhodah promised that no harm should befall her while she remained in his hands, nor should she be delivered over to the Affghauns, in whatever shape or form the demand might be made; but of that which would have been the only efficacious cordial to her sinking spirits—intelligence of her husband—there was no immediate hope; it was more than the life of any stranger was worth to be seen in the streets of the capital, and the inhabitants of Ben Ispahan had experienced too fully the advantages of open dealing in all intercourse with their dangerous enemies, and dreaded too much the consequences which might follow their being detected in making any enquiries in the capital, to venture there during a period of so much jealousy and peril. My wife, while forcibly carried off by villains, had claimed their protection, and she should enjoy it; but not for her, or for any one's sake, would they depart from the system they had adopted, nor endanger their families and property by entering Ispahan, while suffering under the caprice of its tyrannical usurpers. Accordingly, she was kindly entertained in the Ketkhodah's family, but remained there a prey to the most cruel anxiety.

"This rencounter with the Affghaun soldiers, and the rescue of a Persian woman whom they were carrying off, became a matter of conversation throughout the little town; and as Zoolfah, in her

communications with the Ketkhodah, had not concealed the name of her family, which she mentioned, in hopes of interesting him to make enquiries after her husband; this also became publicly known. It happened, that, these circumstances being alluded to in a shop in the bazaar when there were several strangers present, one of them, turning with surprise to the speaker, begged that he would relate the whole story. The man repeated what he had heard, but referred the stranger for farther particulars to the Ketkhodah himself, in whose family the lady continued to reside.

"The stranger lost no time in applying to the Ketkhodah; and, after civilly requesting to be informed of every thing relating to the lady's story, told him that he himself was one of Cazee Meerza Mootaalib's sons, and that she who was indebted to his hospitable protection, was, consequently, his own sister. That he had been for a long time absent from Ispahan, and was on his return there, to learn how his family had fared during all the revolutions of the capital, when the tidings of the insurrection at Casveen, and the consequent proscriptions and massacres at Ispahan, had reached his ears, and he had taken refuge within the walls of Ben Ispahan, intending to remain there until the storms in that quarter should subside. He now begged the Ketkhodah to inform his sister of his presence, and of his willingness to receive her

under his own protection until the fate of her husband should be known; and he offered at the same time to produce undeniable proofs of his identity.

"The Ketkhodah had no objection to make to so reasonable a proposal; perhaps he might not be ill pleased to be relieved from a charge which was not free from inconvenience or responsibility. The man did, in fact, prove to be Meerza Neyaz Allee, second son of Cazee Meerza Mootaalib, who, some years previous to the siege of Ispahan, had gone to study the law at Koom, and who, hearing of his father's death, had resolved to return home, in hopes of receiving a considerable portion of his wealth; when, as he told the Ketkhodah, he had been scared from the city by accounts of the horrors which were committing there.

"In the first interview with Zoolfah he learned enough to comprehend that the bulk of his father's fortune was in my hands, and he resolved to leave no means untried to wrest it from me. As a first and most important step towards this purpose, he resolved to get my wife into his power; for he did not doubt that I would willingly ransom her back upon his own terms, provided he could find means to carry her off beyond the reach of any influence I might possess in Ispahan.

"The affectionate solicitude which he affected for my poor Zoolfah, and the assurances which he

gave her, of sparing neither trouble nor risk to ascertain my fate, won upon her so far, that, though she had never liked her brother, she now willingly accepted his protection, and was received by his wife as an inmate of his harem, until some intelligence of me should be obtained.

"The Meerza kept his word, in setting all possible enquiries regarding me on foot; nor did he fail to discover that I had escaped the massacre which had been so general, and that I was at that very time in the greatest despair, making every possible effort to recover my lost wife. But he did not tell her this: on the contrary, he resolved to carry her to Koom, where he should have it in his power to deal with her on better terms for himself; and in order to induce her ready compliance, he framed a story that he had certain information of my having escaped from the slaughter and gone in that direction for the purpose of seeking her. It was at this time also, that by way of opening his negotiation with me and stimulating my hopes, he conveyed to me the intimation of Zoolfah's safety, which was the first thing that raised me from the depths of despondency.

"The bare idea of meeting me made poor Zoolfah impatient to quit Ben Ispahan; and Meerza Neyaz Allee was too desirous to compass his own ends to detain her long. Taking a considerable

circuit to avoid the plundering parties of the Affghauns, they left on their right the plain and village of Mootchacoor, and entered the pass of Kohrood a little beyond the village of Soo. They were ascending the steep and intricate path, and calculated upon reaching the village of Kohrood long before the day should close, when, as they opened out the gorge of a narrow rocky ravine, they were startled by a shrill shout; and before they had time to look round, fourteen or fifteen savage-looking horsemen suddenly started from behind the huge fragments of rocks that lay scattered on the mountain-side, and rushing down the rugged precipice as if it had been a level plain, couched their spears, and called on them to surrender. The Meerza's party were just then slowly picking their way along a narrow and stony path, which slanted along the face of a steep and craggy slope; beneath yawned a dark chasm, which in winter formed the bed of a torrent produced by the melting snows. The Meerza's horse, terrified at the sudden uproar, reared upright, and unable to recover itself, fell backward with its master, and they rolled together down the slope, and fell with a heavy crash into the chasm beneath. No one, however, attended to their fate; each did the best he could to escape, but only one or two of the best-mounted servants succeeded. Some of the mules, kicking off their loads, ran

capering here and there among the rocks; the rest of the party, including my unfortunate wife, half dead with terror, were seized, and found themselves totally helpless at the mercy of this ferocious band.

"No time was lost by their captors in securing the women upon mules, and replacing all the loads that could be recovered; the rest were abandoned for the time, and each of the party seizing a horse or mule thus loaded, by the bridle, struck their sharp stirrups into their own horses' flanks, and urged them unsparingly up the steep and stony face of the mountain. They continued thus to ascend for two hours unremittingly, sometimes winding along the slope, and occasionally pressing right up the steepest declivities, even when covered with shivered fragments from the precipices above. When they had reached the summit of the mountain, their panting horses were so severely blown, that they were forced to halt and give them breath. They permitted them to pick the scanty herbage that grew among the stones for an hour, and offered some buttermilk and water to the women, who by this time were hardly able to support themselves upon their horses: but they were forced to mount again, and after a descent of two hours as dangerous and fatiguing as their ascent, they reached a deep and narrow valley, where a fresher verdure was pro-

duced by the moisture of a little stream, and where, upon some level spots beneath the rocks, were scattered a few black tents.

"The evening was by this time closing fast in, but the people rushed from their tents at the shouts of their friends, and received them with yells of joy. The women were lifted half-dead from their horses, and carried into a tent, where such refreshment as could be produced by its wild inhabitants was plentifully set before them. But they were in no condition to accept these well-meant attentions; terror and despair overwhelmed their souls, and all they wished for was leave to lie down and die in quiet.

"This, however, would by no means have suited the purpose of their captors, who were retainers of Kooch Allee Beg, the chief of a wandering tribe inhabiting the mountains between Kohrood and Goolpaigaun. Like many others of these chiefs, he supported his establishment and retainers by plunder; and infested all the roads around, seizing on passengers and goods, and demanding exorbitant ransoms for the persons of those who unfortunately fell into his power. Ever since the Affghaun invasion, he had continued their bitter and unvanquished foe, and had done them no small damage, by pouring suddenly on parties of their troops while marching unwarily about the neighbouring country. Perhaps his men believed that

the Meerza and his train were Affghauns; not that a knowledge to the contrary would have made any particular difference in their favour,—for Affghaun or Persian, Toork or Taujuck, were treated with perfect equality by Kooch Allee Beg. All of them brought plunder or ransom to his coffers. The capture of two such women as the wife of Meerza Neyaz Allee and Zoolfah, independent of their female attendants, was looked on as a prize of no small consequence; and the men resolved to carry them straight to the castle of their chief. The poor creatures could not taste food, but the wife of the Reish Suffeed * of the encampment prepared a rich cordial for their use, and presented it with some words of comfort—bade them be of good cheer, for the Khan (might his prosperity increase!) was not a harsh or cruel man, and doubtless would restore them to their friends upon payment of a reasonable ransom. A ray of hope seemed to dart into their minds at this more cheering view of their case; they drank the cordial, and sank to profounder rest than they had ever again expected to enjoy.

"Early next morning the party prepared to proceed. The women, though suffering and fatigued, were forced once more to mount their horses; and quitting the black tents, they descended the valley. After toiling over some rough mountain-

* Grey-beard—i. e. Elder, or Chief.

ous ground, thinly sprinkled with stunted oak-trees, they wound gradually downward to a valley of larger size, in which stood a large fortified village, surrounded by cultivated ground. Numerous groups of black tents were scattered over the plain beyond it, and their flocks fed in the mountains around.

"It was well on in the afternoon before the party reached the village, having had no refreshment, except a little buttermilk and water, during the whole day. The prisoners were immediately taken to the house of the Khan, which was surrounded with a high wall of mud, with towers at each corner, and which to the miserable captives seemed a hopeless prison. The women were sent into the harem, where they were immediately surrounded by the inferior females of the family, who flocked about them with looks of the utmost curiosity, examining their persons and clothes with an energy that threatened to leave not a shred of them upon their backs. Order was, however, restored by the arrival of two elder women, who came to desire that the captive ladies should instantly be brought into the presence of their mistress, the Khanum.*

"They were accordingly led into a small apartment, where they found an old woman smoking a pipe; her head was muffled up in shawls, and her

* Khan's wife, the female of Khan.

dress, though a little fantastic, was not deficient in richness, being a mixture of that which is usually worn by Persian ladies of rank, with the garb more peculiar to the women of the tribes. Her countenance, although wrinkled by age, wore an expression of benevolence, and the lustre of her full dark eye was yet unquenched. She received the ladies with kindness, addressing to them a few words intended for consolation; observing that fortune was sometimes propitious when she appeared to be most adverse; that their situation might prove to be more agreeable than they looked for;—and she was proceeding to prove how much cause they had to be thankful for having fallen into such good hands, when she was interrupted by a slight cry from the wretched Zoolfah, who, unable to support herself any longer, sank on the ground at the feet of the Khanum.

"For some time previous to her being carried off from Ispahan, my poor wife had enjoyed the hope of becoming a mother. The continued agitation she had suffered since then, had greatly enfeebled her frame, and horror at her capture by the people of Kooch Allee Beg, united with the fatigue of the last two days' distressing journeys, completed her derangement. Assistance was given to her; she was carried into another apartment, where a miscarriage, accompanied by the most alarming symptoms, terminated her hopes, and almost her life.

" For many weeks she continued in the utmost danger, during all which time she received the most careful attention, and the Khanum herself came frequently to see her. Youth and disease had a fearful struggle; but, happily for me, the first prevailed, and Zoolfah slowly recovered. When, after several months, she was able to leave her room, the Khanum would have her come to her own apartment, and, honouring her with a seat near herself, would seek to hear her story, and always repaid the obligation by some pithy apothegm or moral observation. But whenever my wife touched upon the subject of her liberty or ransom, she would put aside the appeal. 'Time enough, my child, to talk of that when you are stronger; you could not move at present if you were free to go where you would. Besides, the Khan alone settles these matters—I never meddle with them; and he is absent now—but he will soon return, and you will learn what are his intentions regarding you.'

" The Khan did accordingly return, and with him his two sons, both of whom had been absent on expeditions, from which they brought back both prisoners and booty. Some of these were females, and they were taken into the harem of the Khan, and appropriated to one part or other of the family, for both his sons had their establishments of women within its extensive walls.

"A few days after his arrival, the chief desired to see my wife, of whose recovery he had been informed; and accordingly she was ordered to attend in the Khanum's apartment, where he chose to receive her.

"He was a man well stricken in years, and the expression of his countenance was pleasing, though tinctured with something of wildness: his beard, of a silver grey, covered the greater part of his still ruddy and healthful cheeks, and a piercing dark eye, of unsubdued brilliancy, seemed to vouch for the unshaken powers of both body and mind. His turban, formed of several coloured handkerchiefs, was swathed fantastically round his head, falling back over one shoulder; and a grey sheep's-skin cloak was flung carelessly over his plain brown vest.

"The Khanum was seated at a little distance below her lord, and the only male in the apartment besides himself was his youngest son, a man of about five-and-twenty years of age, and of a most unpromising expression of countenance. His face of a dark, sallow hue, was thickly pitted with the small-pox, which had seamed one cheek in a fearful manner, and distorted the eye on that side; his black eye-brows, and thin curly beard, gave an additional gloom to the ferocity peculiar to his features. He was round-shouldered, and square built; and though an excessive habitual stoop de-

tracted from his height, it did not perceptibly diminish the massy bulk of his person.

"My wife, when she entered, was still covered with her veil, and upon observing the young man, whose fierce licentious looks inspired her with an instinctive dread, she drew its folds closer around her, and remained standing near the bottom of the apartment, uncertain how to act.—Even the Khanum's order to unveil was disregarded; but the chief, with good-humoured impatience, exclaimed—'Punah-be-khodah! what nonsense is this? what does the silly creature fear? Remove thy veil, child; here are none to harm thee. Thou art not now among the Khans or the merchants of Ispahan; you are among the tribes: we are honest, rough mountaineers, girl; you must leave these city airs, and do as we do. Come, come, off with thy veil, thou little fool, or I shall think thou hast no face to show.'—There was no resisting longer, and had she been inclined to try so foolish a part, it would not have availed her: two slaves stepped forward to lend their aid, so she at once threw off her veil; and shone forth upon the old man and his son in all her beauty.—'Yah ullah!' cried the old chief, as he motioned her to be seated—'what is this that has come among us!—this is a true virgin of Paradise; Zooleikah and Shireen* were nothing to her! By the head of

* Potiphar's wife; and the mistress of Kai Khosroo, two heroines celebrated in Persian romance.

my father! I must get young again for her sake. What say you, Khanum—think you I may yet prove a fit lover for this fair one? But no, no!—I have had my day—so sweet a rose is not for the bosom of a withered old mummy like me; let the young mate with the young; we must see to have her better matched.'

"Thus did the lively old chief jest on. Yet, though there was an import in his words which filled the heart of Zoolfah with fearful forebodings, the terror they conveyed was nothing to that which thrilled through her frame at the fixed and ominous looks of the son, who started with hideous delight as the veil dropped from her countenance, and continued gazing with intent and gloating eyes upon her trembling form. The moment the chief ceased to speak, she seized the opportunity to cast herself before him, and to supplicate in the most earnest terms that he should consent to receive her ransom, and send her back to Ispahan.

"'What news are these*?—what does she say? —what does she mean?" said he, turning sharply to his wife, who sat quietly looking on at what was passing: 'have you treated her ill? is she not contented? what more would she have? Explain,

* *Che Khuber ust*? literally, "what is the news?" is a common expression of displeased astonishment in Persia, as, "what is all this about?" in English.

in the name of heaven!'—'Thy slave would represent to her lord,' replied the Khanum, 'that the poor captive before his august presence is foolish, very foolish. She talks of a husband, and wants, forsooth! to get back to him; as if, indeed, there were not many better husbands to be had among our brave Koordish youths. But she will learn wisdom anon: and when your Highness shall again deign to enlighten her steps with the brightness of your countenance, the heart of the unfortunate will expand, and she will comprehend her happiness in having found favour in your Lordship's eyes.'

"A buzz of applause arose from the female attendants at this speech: 'Mash-allah! the Khanum is right;—certainly; excellently said;—she is truly fortunate, and she will become wise. God is merciful! she will henceforth understand her duty.' 'Yes, yes, no doubt of it, if she will see her folly, and cast it from her,' observed the Khan, as taking a long whiff of a fresh calleeoon, he slowly puffed it out, and nodding his head twice or thrice good-humouredly, he repeated, 'Yes, yes, daughter: Insh-allah! your eyes will be opened to see your good fortune, in falling among those who know how to value you, and be kind to you; and you will soon be happier among us than ever you were in your life. You may retire,—you have leave:—the Khanum will see that you are made com-

fortable in every respect.' Another murmur of applause arose from the females. 'Belli! belli! belli!* how good, how kind, how condescending a master! Yah Allee! he is the shadow of the oppressed, the support of the weak, the shield of the wounded and the prisoner! May God preserve him and increase his prosperity! Come, come, offer your thanks, make your salaam, and retire as he bids you. Come, come away!' There was no more to be said, so they hurried her off, weeping and striving to make herself heard, in a vain attempt to move the compassion of those who could neither comprehend the nature nor the cause of her grief.

"A period of several months elapsed after this, during which she had frequent intercourse with the Khanum; but although she pined for another opportunity of entreating the chief to send and negotiate for her ransom at Ispahan, she was constantly disappointed, for he was almost continually absent upon various expeditions; and the females whom she would have engaged to solicit an audience for her, laughed at her distress, saying, that better things were intended for her than she thought of for herself: thus the unfortunate Zoolfah had only to shed her tears in secret, and nurse the faint hope of better days, which, in spite of reason itself, would not be extinguished in her

* *Belli*, signifies "yes;" and is colloquially used as an exclamation of gratified surprise.

breast. Once or twice, as she sat with the Khanum, the chief's youngest son came in, and terrified her with his ominous glances; and, unhappily, it afterwards appeared that he had seen her but too often, and at times when she was not aware of being observed. Still, however, she enjoyed tranquillity upon the whole; and, excepting in the particular of being utterly deprived of liberty, her treatment in the house of the Khan was as kind as possible.

"One day she received a message from the Khanum, requiring her presence; and on repairing to that lady's apartment, she found there not only the old chief, but his two sons. The elder, whom she had not before seen, was a tall, mild, sickly-looking young man, whose composed and pleasing countenance appeared in very favourable contrast with the dark scowl and malevolent expression of his younger brother. To this person she was introduced by the old man in a strain of panegyric, the motive of which could not be mistaken. But her beauty and modesty appeared to be lost upon the youth, who replied to his father in set terms, of which the manner was still colder than the matter. The old chief lost patience at this—'Too Khodah!* Hoossein,' cried he hastily; 'I believe the gins or the devil have certainly bewitched you, for no young man or son

* "In God's name!"

of mine could otherwise talk in so cold a fashion of such a creature as this. Puna-be-khodah! the snow of Elwund is not colder than your heart, if we are to judge by this specimen of it. Come, lad, if there be any thing of man about you, warm up, and try to deserve your good fortune! Come, child,' continued he, addressing Zoolfah, 'let your sorrow cease, and be joyful; I am going to be a real father to you;—here is my eldest boy, Hoossein, one of the finest fellows of our tribe—you shall have the honour of espousing him,—what say you to that?'

"The dreadful truth was now disclosed; this was the reason why all talk of ransom was discouraged, and why all within the walls of the harem were on their guard to avoid leading to the subject in any shape. This was the history of all the heart-sickening disappointments and protracted hopes under which my poor Zoolfah had languished. The Khan, struck with her charms and amiable qualities, resolved to bestow her upon his eldest son, whose cold unambitious disposition, and retired tastes, gave the spirited old chief almost as much uneasiness as the lawless extravagance and untameable ferocity of his brother. He hoped that the beauty of his intended wife might awaken whatever of feeling and energy lay dormant in his breast, and he was bitterly disappointed at observing how little he seemed to be affected at her first appearance.

"On the unhappy Zoolfah the effect of this discovery was dreadful. She threw herself at the feet of the Khan, shrieking, 'Oh! no, no! it cannot be—I never can marry him—I am already married to another—you cannot divorce me from my husband—you will not tear me from him for ever! You have ever been kind and good to me, do not kill me now!—send me to Ispahan, and may Allah bless you, and increase your happiness an hundredfold! Any ransom you may demand shall be yours when my husband shall hear where I am—you shall have ten slaves, all better and more beautiful than Zoolfah. See—my cheeks are withered with sorrow—they are sickly and hollow—I shall soon be dead:—kill me at once if you please, but you must not, you cannot force me to marry your son!' Her frantic grief seemed to touch the Khan, but it only induced him to remonstrate more earnestly with what he deemed the folly that would wilfully reject good fortune in her offer. 'In the name of God, child!' said he, 'what is it you want—a husband? Why, here is one in your offer, worth twenty of your pitiful merchants. And what do you suppose has become of him whom you make all this noise about? Why, the Affghauns have long since taken his money, or his head, be sure of that. Seek him, say you? seek him in Ispahan? —the girl is mad, stark mad: why, almost all the

people there have been put to death already, and that vile Ghiljee,* Mahmood, with his rascally successor Ashruff, (may their fathers' tombs be polluted!) have been playing the very devil there —you do not know what you are saying, you are talking rank nonsense. You, a young and beautiful girl, to be set down in such a place, without a friend about you!—why, the first Affghaun soldier you met would make a slave of you, and you would then learn the difference between a scoundrel of a Ghiljee and an honest Koord. No, no! much better as it is. Here you are, and here you shall be safe; no Affghaun ever enters these mountains: my son will make you a capital husband, and you will be a good wife to him, I am sure:—and as for a divorce, why, I make a very good Cazee myself in these parts: let me see who will deny the divorce when I affirm it;—and as to dower, I will find you one myself, for I love you, child, and will have you for a daughter, say what you will.'

"The younger son now stepped forward. 'Father,' said he, 'Hoossein cares not for this beauty. Her charms have no value in his eyes—they fail to warm his cold, indifferent breast. Give her to me —I best deserve her, for I feel her worth—I loved her from the moment I beheld her, and I cannot

* Of the Ghiljee tribe.

live without her; give her, then, to one who can love her, would fight for her, and will win her, though he should die for it.

"'Be silent, shameless,' cried the chief, darting a terrible look upon him, 'I marvel at your insolent audacity!—how dare you interfere with that which I choose to give to another? I have promised her to your brother, and his she shall be. A fine exchange, indeed, she would make of him for a profligate desperado like you! We should have you make a football of her head, and give her body to the ravens, in less than a month. You would pick a quarrel with her the moment you got tired of her, as you did with that wretched Armenian girl whom you took, and insisted upon keeping in spite of all we could do. No, begone! you shall never have her, and you shall see her no more.'

"The elder brother, who had sat a calm spectator of this scene, would now have spoken, but the wretched object of this unseemly discussion, overwhelmed with despair at all she had heard, and horror-struck at the idea of such violence as the father described and the son seemed perfectly ready to perpetrate, was no longer able to support herself, and swooned away. She was instantly borne to her apartment, where she regained her senses only to become the prey of a severe and protracted illness, which once more reduced her to the brink of the grave.

" The old chief now became convinced that the scheme he had formed of making Zoolfah the wife of his eldest son was by no means likely to be accomplished. He found indifference on the one side, and on the other a horror and repugnance so extreme, that their effects threatened to deprive him entirely of his captive. The young man himself feeling no desire for the connexion, and his mild nature revolting at the idea of occasioning so much misery to one who had never done him wrong, remonstrated with the old chief; urging him to listen to the prayer of Zoolfah, and restore her to liberty, upon receiving such ransom as he might think fit to demand. The Khan, induced perhaps as much by a kindly disposition as by the fear of losing all the profits of his acquisition, consented to this arrangement, and the Khanum conveyed to my sick and despairing wife the decision which afforded her the hope of freedom and reunion with the husband whom she loved. That hope was the most efficacious medicine she could have administered; peace of mind was succeeded by health of body, and her wonted plumpness and beauty by degrees returned."

CHAPTER VI.

SEQUEL OF THE YOUNG MERCHANT'S STORY, CONCLUDED.

"It was arranged that an agent of the Khan's should make the requisite enquiries in Ispahan, and that the movements of my wife, when once more able to travel, should be regulated by the intelligence he should transmit. One night, when, after indulging her imagination in many dreams of future happiness, she had retired to bed in the little apartment allotted to her, she was awakened by an indistinct noise beside her, and, rising in alarm, her terror was completed, by observing several persons cautiously moving about her room, by the faint light of a small lantern. The scream which rose to her lips was smothered ere it got vent, by the forcible application of a large rude hand on her mouth, which effectually silenced her cries for help; while at the moment she was seized, a handkerchief was bound over her mouth and

eyes, a loose dress wrapped about her, and she was hurried from her bed into the open air, and borne along so roughly and rapidly, that she could form no more idea of the course which her ravishers were pursuing, than she could see or guess at their persons. In truth, her faculties were so bewildered with terror, that she could only struggle to get free, and endeavour to make her voice be heard; but all was in vain, she could only utter low, stifled murmurs, and her arms were too firmly held for her feeble strength to avail against the iron grasp of the ruffians who controlled her. Her efforts, however, succeeded at last in displacing the bandage over her eyes, so far, at least, as to obtain a partial view of what was going on.

"She was already beyond the walls of the village, borne in the arms of a man whose features she could not discern, and attended by three or four others, who moved forward altogether at a rapid pace. The moon, which was partially obscured by fleecy clouds, gave just light enough to show that they were in a secluded spot, rough with rocks and shrubby bushes, from among which were brought forth five or six horses, ready saddled and equipped. No time was lost in mounting, and a voice, which, in spite of its suppressed tones, the unfortunate Zoolfah shuddered to recognise, ordered one of the party to take charge of the lady, and see that she was firmly secured behind him. 'I,' continued

he, 'must be unfettered, and prepared to resist, should any attempt be made at a rescue.' The voice was that of Mooraud Allee, the younger son of Kooch Allee Beg; and her heart died within her, for she felt that once within his power, there was no more room for hope. Unable to struggle or exert any longer, she passively submitted, and was bound to her seat and to the man in whose charge she had been placed.

"There was scarcely light enough for them to see their way, but the party did not long continue in any beaten track. Turning their faces towards the mountain breast, they forced their way abruptly up its steep ascent, scrambling over a surface so rough, and clearing obstacles so numerous and dangerous, that the boldest riders, and the surest horses, could scarcely keep their saddles or their feet. They picked a precarious and hazardous path for several hours among shivered crags which formed the summits of the mountains; and the care with which they kept their weapons prepared, yet concealed the lighted matches of their fire-arms, in spite of the difficulties of the way, afforded sufficient proof that they both expected and dreaded pursuit. From these precautions my wife, who by degrees had recovered her scattered senses, became convinced that the villainous scheme of which she was the victim had been exclusively the young man's

contrivance, and that his father had never either known of or consented to it.

"When the grey light of morning appeared, they were traversing a wild and elevated tract, among gravelly hills interspersed with spires and crags of rock, alike destitute of vegetation and verdure. No opposition to their progress was to be dreaded here; and they continued to proceed with unabated vigour, until the man who bore my wife behind him gave the alarm, declaring that she was no longer able to support herself, but hung a dead weight upon him, by the fastenings which secured her. This was, in truth, the case: exhausted by fatigue, poor Zoolfah had become almost inanimate, and Mooraud Allee was forced to order a halt at the first convenient spot, where the horses were unbitted and fed, and such provisions has had been prepared, were produced.

"The bandages were now entirely removed from the face of my wife, and she was permitted to adjust her dress, and to convert the handkerchiefs into a veil, to conceal her face from the gaze of her ravishers, which exceedingly distressed her. She made an attempt to intreat and remonstrate against the violence offered her, but was silenced by a stern warning to cease from giving useless trouble, or that the gag should be instantly replaced.

"A halt of two hours was thought sufficient to rest both my wife and the horses: as for the men, they were inured to much severer toil, and did not feel fatigue. Eager to secure his prize, Mooraud Allee insisted on continuing his course, and the party proceeded until darkness once more covered the earth, making but a single short halt at an encampment of wandering tribes. They came upon this camp so unexpectedly, that they could not retreat unobserved, and therefore sent forward two of their number to reconnoitre. These were met by the elders of the tribe, with whom a few words, satisfactory to both parties, being exchanged, the travellers were welcomed and taken to a tent, where food in abundance was produced, and the almost fainting Zoolfah was induced to quench her thirst with some sour milk and water. A more salutary refreshment could not have been administered; it enabled her to support with surprising endurance the fatigues of this arduous journey.

"The clouds which during the latter part of the day, had overspread the sky, threatened a storm towards its close; and the darkness became so excessive after nightfall that the party could not proceed; so, choosing a level spot under the shelter of some overhanging rocks, they once more fed their horses, and mustering close together, in order to secure themselves as much

as possible from the cold blasts that began to howl around, the men went to sleep for a while. As for Zoolfah, they made her up a couch of the numuds and horse-cloths in a retired and sheltered corner of the natural cavern, and, after offering such refreshment as they had to give, they left her to herself.

"But the horror of her situation, surrounded as she was by reckless and ferocious banditti, and entirely in the power of one whose conduct had proved him to be capable of every possible atrocity, was such as utterly to banish sleep, in spite of her deadly fatigue. Trembling with terror she shrank into herself, and would have sought refuge even in the depths of the grave, to shun the fate which she could not doubt was preparing for her. But the tortures of apprehension were not all she was now doomed to suffer; for the silence which reigned after the party had arranged themselves for the night, was broken by the light tread of an approaching foot, and, looking upwards, the dark and massive form of Mooraud Allee was seen relieved against the gloomy sky, and standing close by her couch. Uttering a shriek, my terrified wife sprang from her recumbent posture, and sought instinctively to fly; but the powerful hand of her ravisher was instantly upon her arm, and retained her in its iron gripe. She sank again upon the couch, and faintly im-

plored his mercy. 'What dread you, beauteous Zoolfah?' said he, softening as he might the rough tones of his voice, and sitting down beside her: 'you see before you the most devoted of your slaves. The cruel harshness of my father has driven me indeed to a measure which may seem harsh and unjustifiable in your eyes; but who that sees the beloved object of his soul about to be torn from him for ever, would hesitate to do as I have done? Seek not then to fly me, lovely Zoolfah! but rather increase my devotion by yielding a gentle and willing consent to my happiness, and thus bind me to yourself for ever.'

"The tone in which these words were uttered, was but ill calculated to re-assure his trembling victim: for though the language was that of persuasion, the manner was that of a master to his slave, when he is resolved to be obeyed; and he scarcely suppressed the exultation which he felt at his successful villainy.

"'Alas, my lord!' said Zoolfah in reply, 'what would you have from a wretch like me?—what charms can a married woman, so forlorn, so miserable as I am, have for a chief like you, who can command the love of so many beauties? Be generous, my lord; be like your noble father:—do not detain me longer from him whom duty as well as inclination lead me to join—restore my

liberty, and claim any ransom you may choose to name.'

"'Restore you to liberty? permit you to rejoin your husband?' repeated he with a scornful smile; 'and think you, lovely Zoolfah! that I am likely to yield the prize which has been won by so hazardous, so decisive a measure, to a woman's intreaty or a woman's tears?—No! mine you now are, and mine you shall remain, so long as it is my will to keep you; and let me advise you, as you value your own comfort, nay, as you regard your life, to grant me with a willing heart that affection, or at least that favour, which will otherwise be wrung from you by force.' With these words he seized upon her, resolved as it appeared to make good his threats, regardless of the cries and struggles of my wretched wife, which now rent the air. But his detestable purpose was fearfully interrupted.

"The storm which had gathered around, had for some time begun to break in cold drizzling rain, succeeded by heavy showers and a loud wind. The thunder, distant at first, but gradually rolling onward, now burst in reiterated peals over head, and the vivid flashes of lightning illuminated all the dreary scene. Regardless of the Almighty voice which spoke thus awfully in tempest, the wicked Mooraud Allee was seeking to effect his

iniquitous object, when a flash brighter than the sun at noon-day, accompanied by a terrible crash, shook both the heavens and the earth, and made every one start to their feet, just as a huge mass of rock, close to their resting-place, was scattered in splinters around. The struggling Zoolfah dropped from his hold, as, looking for a moment wildly around him, he staggered and fell to the ground. 'Allah Kereem! what may this mean? where am I? who art thou, fiend?' cried he, after a minute's pause. No answer was returned—and Mooraud Allee, trembling with superstitious awe, slowly arose and retired from the couch of Zoolfah to his own resting-place. The storm had now spent its fury, and was gradually rolling away; but its salutary effect continued, for Zoolfah suffered no farther molestation during the night.

"The march was resumed on the morrow, through an equally wild and difficult country. Towards noon, as the party wound slowly up the steep and craggy face of a mountain, the attention of Zoolfah was attracted by some words which were passing in an under-tone between Mooraud Allee himself, and an old man who seemed to be one of his principal confidants. 'But in the name of God!' demanded the old man, in reply, as it seemed, to something which the other had been relating, 'what do you suppose it to have been?' 'The Devil himself knows best,' responded

Mooraud Allee, 'for he it surely must have been that sent that cursed storm, and the infernal vision that rode upon it, to disturb me at so critical a moment, and cheat me of my promised happiness. Why, Caussim, I swear by my father's head, and by my own soul, that I saw it as plainly as I now see you:—the flash had passed away, and the gloom of total blindness had covered my eyes, when that bright figure stood before me, with menacing eyes, and waved me from the spot where I lay by her who would so soon have been my own. I am no woman, as you know, to be frightened at a shadow; but may I never see the Houris of Paradise, or taste the joys of Paradise upon earth in the arms of a willing fair one, if the vision bore not the form and feature of Haweeza, the Armenian girl, whose death was to be attributed rather to her own obstinate folly than to my hasty anger! I did love that creature, Caussim; and the astonishment, nay the terror which seized me on seeing the dead interpose thus between me and my purpose, suspended every faculty. Shame be upon me! I slunk away like a detected thief, and had no courage to return to the charge. But I will be even with her yet for this; to-night we shall be safely lodged with my friend Zekee Khan,—no storm will trouble us there, and no Haweeza shall interpose again to thwart me: mine she shall be then, in spite of

hell or heaven themselves.'—'Ay, ay,' replied Caussim, with a repressed laugh, 'I do not doubt it, Sir; no fear but you will redeem such a pledge! All I wonder at is, that you should have allowed yourself to be foiled last night by any false alarm; for false I cannot but believe it, however powerful its effect may have been. But come, I must push forward and give notice of your coming at Kallah Ahendewar. Before you can descend into the valley beyond the pass, I shall have reached the fort. God give you a safe journey till then!' So saying, and saluting his master as he passed, he rode forward, and was soon out of sight.

"This dialogue was but ill calculated to comfort or encourage its unhappy object, who required no such farther proof of her ravisher's determination to effect her ruin; and who felt with a sinking heart every circumstance that confirmed the unlimited control he exercised over her fate: nevertheless, she tried to brace her mind to the task of resisting to the uttermost every effort, whether of fraud or force, which should be directed against her virtue, and resolved to sacrifice life itself, rather than consent to the loss of her own honour or that of her husband.

"In the mean time they reached the summit of the pass, and, after winding for nearly a fursung along a dangerous chasm, which seemed to have

cleft the mountains in sunder, they reached a point from whence they overlooked a very wild and singular valley. It was inclosed by rugged mountains, the feet of which were scantily clothed with dwarf oaks. A vast quantity of grey stones, the wreck of the shattered peaks above, covered the greater part of the middle region, while a rich green tint among the rocks that formed their summits, gave token of the plentiful pasture enjoyed by the flocks and herds that fed there. A full and rapid stream, formed by the union of two principal branches, and fringed with wood of better growth, ran in a rough and stony bed, which straggled from one side of the narrow glen to the other, sometimes running along the foot of lofty walls of rock, and sometimes winding through a patch of green meadow. The point of junction between the two torrents was a bold and lofty rock, the termination of a mountainous ridge, nowise inferior in altitude to those which bounded in the principal glen. This rock rose precipitously on every side but that on which it was connected with the parent ridge, and there, a narrow neck, formed for defence by the hand of nature, afforded the only means of approach. A station so peculiarly adapted for security, was not likely to be overlooked in a country like this; and accordingly, the level ground upon its summit, comprehending an area of no incon-

siderable extent, had from time immemorial been the site of a fortress, which was always the stronghold of some bold predatory chieftain.

"The Kallah Ahendewar*—such was the name of this stronghold—was at this time in possession of Zekee Khan, a chief of the Lac tribe, whose father, a hardy and lawless freebooter, after having laid the neighbouring country under contribution for thirty years, had been killed some little time before, in an expedition against a tribe of Bucktiarees. Zekee Khan, a zealous follower of his father's footsteps, was an acquaintance, and, as he professed himself, a friend of Mooraud Allee, who had more than once assisted him with his followers, his counsel, and the might of his own arm, in his murderous enterprizes, partaking, no doubt, of the gain which they produced. Mooraud Allee, confiding in these assurances of friendship, made choice of this inaccessible retreat to secure himself from all pursuit: he was satisfied that here no vengeance could reach him, and no force could rend his victim from his grasp. The Kallah Ahendewar was therefore destined to be the termination of his present expedition, and the prison of poor Zoolfah.

"After a long and painful descent from the mountain, they drew near to the place, and its dark features became one by one more prominent and

* The Fort with Walls of Iron.

imposing. The original fabric, which was attributed to the great Jemsheed, had been formed of ponderous masses of stone and lime, so firmly cemented, that time itself had failed of making its usual impression on them. Several different superstructures had been reared upon this solid foundation; and each in its turn had contributed to the imposing group of walls, towers, and bastions, which now crowned and encircled the whole rock. But the reigning character of the place was that of gloomy strength. The dark grey walls, following the irregular inflexions of the rock in curious points and angles, were diversified in some places with a tower, a lofty bastion, or the roof of a house, rising above the general level; and the indentings of embrasures and crennels sometimes relieved the monotony of its outline; but, on the whole, the aspect of the place was dreary and forbidding; and as, after a weary circuit which afforded her ample time for contemplating the walls of her future prison, my wretched wife was led through the heavy gates and intricate passages of its outer works, her heart entirely failed her, and she felt as if hope itself, which never quits the human heart, could find no entrance there.

"The party was met at the outer gateway by a brother of the Khan, attended by a suitable train of his officers and household, to welcome Mooraud Allee in a strain of due respect. He was con-

ducted to the residence prepared for him, and Zoolfah was received by an eunuch, and certain female attendants, who, lifting her half-dead from the horse, carried her into the inner apartments, and laid her carefully on a soft couch. A bath was instantly prepared, and every possible means were taken to remove the painful effects of her fatiguing journey. The attendants then quitted the apartment, and left her to repose.

"The first use she made of this liberty was to examine her prison. It was a small apartment, neatly fitted up, with most of the usual requisites of female accommodation; the light was admitted through one small window, which opened at a great height above the floor, in a wall of immense thickness. On clambering up with some difficulty, she shuddered to behold that it looked down upon a high and giddy precipice, at the foot of which foamed a furious torrent; so that escape on that side was utterly impossible, except by a frightful death. But even this dismal resource had been guarded against, for the window was secured with cross bars of iron. As to the door, it opened upon a passage bordering a small court, which seemed to form a part of the Khan's own Zenanah, and was consequently securely guarded. At sight of these ominous precautions, the wretched Zoolfah, sick with the conviction of inevitable fate, fell down exhausted on the couch, and abandoned

herself for some time to despair. But her resolution returned by degrees, and she endeavoured to fortify her mind for the hour of trial. Determined to part with life rather than suffer her honour to be sullied, she had found means to secrete a small knife about her person; and assuring herself that it was still there, and at hand in case of need, she lay awaiting what might be preparing for her in silent but intense agitation.

"The remainder of the day passed over undisturbed. Once or twice a female slave came in, to know if any thing was wanted by the lady, but retired immediately on receiving a negative reply, and the night closed in without any cause of alarm. It might be more than two hours after the time of evening prayers, when the door opened, and several attendants, bearing lights, approached to Zoolfah, intreating her to rise and array herself in a rich dress which they presented to her. 'Whence come these things?' enquired Zoolfah: 'on whose part are they sent? and why should a prisoner, for as such I must consider myself, be thus decked out?'—'It is not for us to answer these questions, lady,' replied one, the principal among them; 'nor need you make yourself uneasy on the subject. Here no female has any choice but that of passive obedience, and it will be well that you be found disposed to yield implicitly to the arrangements of those in whose power you now are.'—To

have attempted resistance in a point of trivial consequence, would have been provocation of evil, so she permitted the slaves to dress and ornament her, and they seated her at the upper end of the room upon a carpet of fine felt.

"A banquet was now brought in, a white cloth was spread before her, and rich dishes in profusion were placed upon it, while sherbet and wine sparkled in vessels of china and silver beside them. When all was ready, the slaves withdrew, and she alone remained awaiting the event in speechless anxiety.

"Not long was she suffered to wait; the door opened once more, and the hateful form of Mooraud Allee entered, unannounced, with all the authoritative air of a master. He, likewise, had changed his garb, and his ungainly figure was now clad in gorgeous apparel.

"Disregarding the scream of horror which burst involuntarily from poor Zoolfah, as she shrank from his approach, he walked up to the couch, and seating himself by her, took her unwilling hand, and in a voice intended to be soothing, expressed his hopes that she had in some degree recovered the fatigue of her rapid journey; a journey, he again assured her, the necessity of which he regretted; 'and I trust,' added he, 'that I may now look for a more favourable reception from the lovely Zoolfah, than she was disposed to grant

to her slave when last he had the happiness of a private interview. She will do well to remember that there is no chance of interruption here; in this place, she is known only as my wife, and she must submit to be treated as such.'

"'Your wife!' exclaimed Zoolfah, pale with terror at the expression of his countenance, as much as at his words—'Never! never!—it cannot, shall not be! You may torture me, you may kill me, and work your pleasure on my wretched corse, but while I live I never will be your wife!'

"'You are right,' replied he with a sneer; 'that detested title need not be forced upon you;—but what think you of being my slave, my minion? the creature of my pleasure while the fancy lasts—the worthless, rejected drudge of my will when it ceases? The day may come when you shall eagerly but fruitlessly solicit the offers you now reject—the despised and cast-off mistress of Mooraud may rue the hour in which she refused the honoured name of wife! Reflect, then, lovely Zoolfah—yet once again I tender you that proud distinction; be wise, and accept it, for I swear that from hence I do not depart without full possession of your charms!'

"'Never! never!—once more I tell thee, man, that nothing but the corse of Zoolfah shall ever be subjected to thy insults!—Leave me!—leave me

instantly! I am not so helpless as you think. Once the angry voice of Heaven interposed to save me from the pollution of thy touch; and think not because I seem alone and in thy power, that therefore thy wicked purpose shall be accomplished!'—'That we shall presently see,' said Mooraud, and he rose with the words, intending to seize her in his arms; but my virtuous and noble wife, springing suddenly to the other end of the apartment, gained time to draw the little dagger which she had prepared:—'There is no resource but this, then!' exclaimed she;—'oh! Aboo Talib, I shall see thee no more, but I die thy unpolluted wife!' While yet uttering these words, with a desperate blow she plunged the sharp blade up to the handle in her bosom: the monster rushed forward just in time to catch her as she staggered backwards, and was covered with her spouting blood.

"This was a catastrophe he had never anticipated, and one which effectually frustrated his diabolical intentions. Slowly he bore the pale and bleeding body of his victim to the couch, where she lay without sense or motion. He believed that she was already dead; and somewhat shocked, but much more disappointed, by her sudden fate, he vociferated for help; the attendants rushed in; and hastily framing some tale to account for the bloody spectacle before them, he quitted the apart-

ment, and left, as he believed, the body alone of the miserable Zoolfah to their care.

"The pain of drawing the knife from the wound, which was followed by a new flow of blood, produced a groan from my poor wife, and gave her attendants the first hint that life was not totally extinct. They staunched the blood with bandages, and placed her in an easy posture on the couch:—it was long before the light of returning animation beamed in her half-closed eyes, and it was with a fearful shudder that she first opened them, and gazed wildly around; but, when she saw none but female countenances about her, the terror of her look subsided, she closed her eyes again and lay perfectly quiet, uttering only now and then a deep sigh.

"There is a benevolent and sympathetic kindness in the female heart, which, when unchecked by any feeling of jealousy or hatred, is ever readily excited by a suffering object, and particularly if that object happen to be a female, young and interesting like the luckless Zoolfah. The women of the Khan's family, when they heard of the accident, ascribing it naturally to some unmanly violence on the part of the supposed husband, flocked one and all to see and make offer of their attentions. Full of indignation at the savage cruelty which, although they were ignorant of the whole truth, could alone, they felt, have led to

so fatal a catastrophe, they resolved, if possible, to make her tyrant feel; and therefore continued to give out that her life was in the greatest danger, although it was soon discovered that the knife, glancing along a rib, had failed to penetrate the chest, and therefore had not inflicted a mortal wound. They soon, indeed, observed the dread which she entertained of her tyrant's visits; and with the humane design of exempting her from the misery of his presence, they continued to maintain the belief of her danger even after her convalescence was well advanced.

"But Providence, which at its own good pleasure baffles or promotes the best-laid plans of mortals, and confounds alike the wisdom of the sage and the power of the tyrant, had already decreed that my unfortunate wife should be delivered from the hands of this miscreant by an agency on which he never calculated. The adventure of the wounded lady had made no little noise in the harem; her beauty was the theme of every tongue, and so highly was it vaunted of by the women of the Khan, that he became desirous of judging for himself how far it merited their praises.

"It never is a matter of difficulty for the master of a house, particularly if he be a chief of power so unlimited as Zekee Khan, to obtain a sight, unknown to herself, of any female who may chance to be within his walls; nor did any scruples of con-

science or of delicacy withhold the Khan from enjoying this gratification. Unseen himself, he beheld Zoolfah, and was so much captivated with her beauty, that he resolved on appropriating her to himself. He therefore caused his friend to be informed that the lady was not likely to recover; and when Mooraud Allee insisted on being allowed an interview, he coldly replied, that, after the violence which had already taken place, he did not feel justified in permitting the continuance of an intercourse which might be fatal to an unfortunate person under his roof, and therefore under his protection. Mooraud Allee stormed and blustered; but the Khan observing that his own stronghold was not the place where he could submit to be bullied, and adding his regret that the air of Kallah Ahendewar appeared to have disordered the health of his guest, he took the hint and his leave together, and quitted the country of Zekee Khan in no small haste.

"Congratulations on account of this fortunate deliverance were offered to my wife, and a hint was conveyed along with them, which gave her much reason to dread that her situation was but little altered for the better. When her recovery was complete, she received a formal intimation that it was the Khan's intention to solicit an interview in the apartment of his lady. The thoughts of such a scene renewed all her apprehensions and distress,

but she was unexpectedly relieved; for tidings having reached the Khan that a plundering party of Affghauns had penetrated into Louristan farther than was customary or safe, he suddenly assembled his followers and quitted the castle, to assist the other chiefs of that province in repelling them.

"A day or two after his departure, while, yet trembling with apprehension, Zoolfah was musing over her melancholy fate, and looking forward to the future with despondency, her door opened, and a stranger female, of great beauty, richly dressed, and attended by two veiled slaves, entered her apartment. 'You are surprised, lady,' said the stranger, seating herself by the side of Zoolfah, and taking her hand with a smile of the most fascinating sweetness—'you are at a loss how to interpret this visit of a stranger; but be not apprehensive, though you have no knowledge of me,—I am your sincere friend, and I am come hither to prove it. In me you see Zeenut-ul-nissa, Khanum, the favourite wife of Zekee Khan, the chief in whose power you now are.'

"Zoolfah had frequently heard of this lady during her stay within the walls of Ahendewar, although till now she had been a stranger to her person; nor had report been silent with regard to her character. She was said to have a proud, ambitious spirit; and though her temper was violent and revengeful, she had, it was understood, suffi-

cinet craft and self-command, when her interest required the effort, to veil her wrath under a mask of smiles, and Zoolfah thought she could detect somewhat of this in the air of cordial friendship which it was her pleasure to assume upon this her first and long-deferred visit. It was not, however, her interest, nor her wish, to offend the Khanum, and therefore rising with a respectful salute, she begged to be honoured with her commands.

"'Be seated, my dear Zoolfah,' said the Khanum, with another sweet smile, in which, however, might be traced an air of patronage:—'I have heard much about you, which has awakened a powerful interest in your fate: circumstances, of no small importance, have deprived me of the pleasure of visiting you during your illness, and from listening to your story from your own mouth; but I now ask that satisfaction, which I hope you will not refuse. We have time enough upon our hands this morning, for I have provided against all interruption, and I intreat that you will now consider me, what in fact you will find me, your sincere and zealous friend,—and that you will treat me with the confidence which such a one deserves.'

"Misfortune, that great instructress, had taught poor Zoolfah to be cautious in yielding her confidence; and this caution was not decreased by the knowledge she had of the Khanum's reputed

character. But there was nothing calculated to excite suspicion in this enquiry; and so fascinating was the semblance of sympathy to one who had long been deprived of all the consolations of friendship, that it cannot be wondered at if my unfortunate wife was easily induced to comply with a request, which, in truth, was equivalent to a command. She told the Khanum so much of her story as sufficed to make her perfectly acquainted with her situation; and concluded with an earnest intreaty that she would interest herself in procuring her liberty; adding, that whatever ransom might be required, should be paid the moment she reached Ispahan.

"'My dear Zoolfah,' observed the Khanum, when the former had concluded,—'I pity you most sincerely. Good Heavens! what a fate, to be separated so long as you have been from such a husband!—and he, poor man! what must not he have endured, provided, as I doubt not is the case, he has survived the bloody scenes at Ispahan? But I trust your ill-fortune is drawing to a close; it shall be my business to give another colour to your fate. Now listen to me:—you have fortunately got rid of one tyrant, but without some nice management you will not find your condition much improved. The Khan, my husband, has unhappily seen you, and has taken a liking to your person. I know this full surely, and I am

but too well acquainted with the customary course of such fancies. Totally in his power as you are, you could not avoid the fate you dread; but his passion once gratified, the toy would lose its value in his eyes, and he might perhaps dispose of you to the next slave-merchant that should come to the castle. Such is the Khan, such the fickleness of his affection:—well as I know him, even I find it no easy task to fix his fancy and retain his volatile affections.'—She gazed haughtily round for a while, as if she felt the sacrifice which pride was making to interest; but her features resumed their sweet expression, and the consciousness of superior beauty lighted up her face with a glow of exultation, as her eye fell on a mirror near; she then continued her address to Zoolfah. 'I have perhaps given you unnecessary pain, by describing misfortunes which it is my design to avert;—your heroism deserves a better fate. You shall regain your freedom, you shall re-visit Ispahan, you will find and be re-united to your husband!—The Khan will continue absent for some time and I possess interest and adherents sufficient in the castle to insure your leaving it in safety; prepare yourself, therefore; if you wish for freedom it shall be yours to-morrow night; drop not a hint of what has passed between us; rouse not suspicion by the least peculiarity in manner or conduct, but be ready to accompany the person who will be with

you to-morrow at midnight, and who will place you in the hands of a trusty friend, whose orders are to see you safe in the hands of your friends at Ispahan. No thanks!—only comply with my directions—may God protect you, fair Zoolfah! Farewell!' Having spoken thus, the Khanum, embracing her with another sweet smile, arose and quitted the apartment.

"It were vain, as well as useless, to dwell on the joy of Zoolfah at this most unexpected brightening of her prospects. It was long, indeed, before she could believe that all she had just listened to was more real than the dreams that had so often mocked her hopes. When, after a while, she reflected with more composure on what had passed, she was inclined to view with something like jealousy and suspicion the fair offers of this kind lady, who thus for the first time had visited her solitude; but after pondering over the subject as dispassionately as she could, she saw no fair grounds for distrust. It was perfectly natural that a favourite wife should be jealous of a threatened rival, and that she should endeavour to remove her if possible; —that in doing so she should bestow a benefit upon that rival by delivering her from a gloomy prison, was a contingency which did not by any means tend to impugn her good faith. At all events, what fate could be worse than remaining where she was, exposed to the worst of insults, and

to agonies of anxiety and terror, which made her life a burthen? Come what might, she resolved to confide in the Khanum, and accept of the protection she offered her to Ispahan.

"The remaining hours were passed in restless and painful anxiety by Zoolfah. In vain she tried to sleep; although conscious that all her bodily and mental powers would be required in the approaching effort, her eyelids refused to close: or if for a moment she fell into a doze, it was troubled and uneasy; and she awoke with frightful dreams of discovery and prolonged imprisonment. Darkness at length once more covered the castle, and her terror lest any untoward event should occur to interrupt her purposed escape, became almost too much to endure; her limbs trembled, and her soul was sick even to faintness. In this way did three or four weary hours pass on, when a low tap was heard at her door, and upon opening it two female slaves made their appearance and gave the concerted signal. Zoolfah, who was in perfect readiness, did not delay a moment. They threw an Arab cloak over her person, and thus enveloped they traversed many courts and passages, which all were silent and unguarded.

"The females now stopped, and delivered over their charge into the hands of two men, bidding her be of good cheer, for these were the Khanum's people, appointed to be her faithful conductors.

The darkness, the dreariness of the house, and the solitary silence of the vast fabric, imparted a sensation of awe bordering upon terror to the poor Zoolfah, who shuddered as she watched the retiring forms of her female attendants, as if she had then parted with the last of her friends. But a moment's recollection of the horrors she was flying from, and the necessity of retaining all her firmness, recalled her to herself, and she followed her conductors. No words were spoken; and in a few minutes they reached the massy gateway, where only one or two guards were seen lounging at their post. After a short parley with these, a small wicket was opened in the heavy iron-clenched woodwork of the gate, and they found themselves in a short passage. An angle at the farther extremity of this brought them abruptly to the outer gate of all, which was also opened after a short delay; and then the cold breeze of night blew round them, uncontrolled by the walls of the castle.

"The travellers had now no molestation to dread, and no farther obstacle appeared to oppose their progress. A short way onward, they reached a spot where two horses and an ambling mule were found in charge of a servant: my wife was placed on the latter, while the two horses were immediately mounted by her conductors, and the whole party, still without uttering a word, pushed ra-

pidly forward. After a march of rather more than two hours, they reached a miserable village, consisting of a few mud-huts, surrounded with black tents, and here one of the men informed Zoolfah that they must halt for a while. She remonstrated against so wanton a loss of time; but the man, with something of a sneer, bid her not be uneasy, that the danger was now over, that the horses required to be fed, and that they were here to be joined by a person in the Khanum's particular confidence, who was to conduct her to Ispahan. A pang of suspicion and alarm crossed the mind of my wife as she listened to these palpable evasions; but she was helpless, and could offer no resistance to whatever might be intended,—so she held her peace, and did as she was bid.

"The wretched hut where they now halted was inhabited, as it seemed, by a single old woman, who received the weary Zoolfah with very little ceremony. But before much time had elapsed, a fat, middle-aged man entered the room, and was announced as her future conductor to Ispahan. She was particularly struck with the blunt unceremonious manners of this person, and her alarm increased at so unaccountable a transmission of her person from one rude attendant to another. The men now spoke together apart, with much gesticulation, and many significant glances were directed towards my wife, as if they would have scrutinized

her person even through the thick veil and cloak which enveloped her from head to foot: at last he said aloud, 'It is well, I am satisfied; give your mistress this, and tell her she may rely on my obedience to her commands.' The whole then withdrew, and left Zoolfah and the old woman alone in the hut.

"There was something inexplicable in the words, and still more so in the manner of this man, which increased the uneasy suspicions that had arisen in the mind of Zoolfah. Turning to the old woman, she intreated her to tell her who that person was, what he had in charge regarding her, and whether they should soon set out for Ispahan. 'Trouble not yourself, child, about these matters at present,' said she, 'you will soon be made acquainted with every thing; meantime, be content to know that you are in safety, and will in due time be conveyed to Ispahan. And now be advised and go to sleep; it yet wants some hours of day, and there is a long journey before you on the morrow.' This equivocal reply was far from removing the suspicions of my wife; but she considered that she had at all events escaped from her dreary prison, and was under a roof with one of her own sex: these were blessings to be thankful for, and they went a good way to soothe her mind;—fatigue triumphed over anxiety for a season, and she was soon buried in profound repose.

"The sun was yet low, when the voice of the old woman awakened Zoolfah from sleep, and bade her arise and prepare for her journey. On coming forth from the hut, she found no one but the person whose unceremonious behaviour had alarmed her the night before, attended by several servants, all attired for the journey. The manners of this man had undergone no improvement; on the contrary, there was a harshness in the tone of command he assumed, and a disagreeable air of vulgarity conspicuous in his person and address, which renewed all her uneasiness, and increased the suspicions she entertained as to his character, and the views of the Khanum in committing her to his charge. She enquired for her two former conductors, and was informed, that having executed their orders, they had returned to the fort. 'And is this the person who is to conduct me to Ispahan?'—'It is; be satisfied.'

"Every thing being ready, she was led out of the village by the old woman, who was likewise attired for a journey, and taken to a place where half a dozen mules stood prepared for the march; some loaded with baggage, and others with covered cradles for the accommodation of travellers. Here they found her new conductor, who had moved on before, and who now impatiently summoned the old woman, and bade her make haste and lose no more time. The coarse violence of his

language, and the air of a master which he assumed, had now alarmed my wife so much, that she stopped short, and turning with clasped hand to her companion—'For the sake of Allah!' exclaimed she, 'and by your own life! I intreat you to tell me who this rude person may be, and why he bears himself so strangely in my presence. Whither is he to conduct me? what is to be my fate? Have pity on a miserable creature, who is bowed to the earth by reiterated misfortunes!'

"'I tell you,' replied the woman, 'that you are to be carried to Ispahan, and that no harm shall befall you—I——' 'What is the meaning of all this?' interrupted the man, gruffly; 'why keep up a farce like this any longer? why not tell the truth at once? You belong now to me, young woman; I am a slave-merchant; the Khanum has sold you to me; I have paid her her own price for you, and you are now to be carried, along with some other ladies in the same situation, to the great city of Ispahan.' A thunderbolt could not have produced a more sudden effect than this unfeeling speech upon the wretched Zoolfah. With a piercing shriek she fell senseless to the earth, where she lay for some minutes, as if her spirit had for ever departed. Motives of interest, if not of compassion, now induced her master to render her every possible assistance; nor was it without a

great deal of trouble that she recovered under the old woman's care. But she revived only to a keener and more torturing sense of the treachery of the Khanum. With frantic exclamations she addressed the merchant, intreating him to spare her, to restore her to her husband; and her ravings became so alarming that he began to fear her brain was turned, and set himself to soothe her as best he could, directing the old woman also to make use of every method of kindness in effecting the same purpose. Fortunately, a new idea struck my wife, whose mind till then had only been alive to the dreadful impression that she was a slave, the property of another, liable to be sold to any one who might fancy her,—to be exposed, without reserve, to the same evils from which she had with so much difficulty escaped,—or to live, perhaps, a household drudge, for ever separated from her husband. 'Did you say I was to be taken to Ispahan?' exclaimed she eagerly.—'Certainly!' replied the woman; 'it is to Ispahan you are now going.'—'Oh! then, I may once more meet with my husband, after all! Oh, mother! if you have any pity, if you can feel the least compassion for a poor unhappy creature, be a friend to me now; speak in my behalf to the merchant, my master. I will give no more trouble; I will ask for nothing more;—only let me be carried to

Ispahan without delay; let him seek out my husband, and whatever price he chooses to demand for me, he shall freely command.'

"'Be calm, my daughter,' replied the woman, moved at the poignancy of her distress; 'be contented. I have told you the truth: you are now quitting this wild country for the city of Ispahan; Khojah Gholaum Hussun, though his manners are not the gentlest, is not a hard-hearted man: he is a slave-merchant, it is true, but what then? every one must have a calling, and follow it. All he requires is, his fair profit; and all he has promised the Khanum is, that you shall never return to Kallah Ahendewar,—a pledge which, I doubt not, you will readily confirm. And as to your ransom,—if, as you say, you have a husband who chooses to recover you, he will have a fair opportunity for doing so; nay, I am confident that the Khojah will take pains to seek him out, provided he sees a likelihood of receiving a just compensation for his trouble; for in such a case he could not expose you to public view, like other slaves. Collect your scattered senses, therefore, my child, and hope for the best, while I speak a word or two with the Khojah.'

"After some conversation with the old woman, who, in fact, was a species of duenna, whose duty it was to watch the conduct of his slaves,—the merchant, approaching my wife, assured her, with

a more respectful air, and in less offensive terms, that she should have no cause for complaint so long as she might remain in his possession, and promised his best assistance, on their arrival at the capital, in discovering her husband. 'You see, madam,' added he, 'that I am inclined to place every confidence in the truth of your story: should you be deceiving me in any part of it, the consequences will rest upon your own head.'

"No farther time was now lost in commencing the journey. Zoolfah was placed in one of the cradles suspended on either side of a mule, and in the other was stowed the old duenna, whom she preferred to an utter stranger, and who was by no means deficient in kindness. The merchant was as good as his word; and so far from giving any reason of complaint during the journey, he paid great regard to the health and comfort of my wife, and in more instances than one curtailed the day's march in order to accommodate her. They reached Ispahan on the seventh day without accident; and no sooner had the Khojah established himself and his slaves in convenient lodgings, than, in compliance with the impatient wishes of Zoolfah, he commenced enquiries regarding myself. It was not long before he found out one of my agents, who, the moment he became satisfied that the slave he offered for sale was no other than the wife for whose recovery his employer had lavished so much

money and suffered so much anxiety, lost no time in paying down the price required, and added such a present as left the merchant no cause to regret the attention he had shown her, or the trouble she had cost him.

"But though Zoolfah was thus restored to freedom and to safety, there did not appear to be any immediate likelihood of her attaining the object for which she had so long and earnestly panted—a re-union with myself. The distracted state of Persia had rendered communication between distant provinces most difficult, and often impossible: from this circumstance, together with the changes and casualties which had occurred among my various agents, the place of my abode had been almost lost sight of. The length of time also which had elapsed since the loss of my wife, and the constant succession of disappointments which had attended all our efforts to obtain intelligence regarding her, had thrown a colour of hopelessness over the whole affair, which caused a relaxation on their parts, and almost induced myself to despond. Thus it was not surprising that the happy tidings of her safety did not reach me for many months after her restoration, and came even then by so circuitous and uncertain a channel, that I could not feel assured of its reality until I actually reached Ispahan.

"It is needless for me to dwell on my delight at

recovering after so many perils, the dear object of my unswerving love, pure and unsullied, kind and affectionate as ever. I vowed that I would henceforth watch over her with double vigilance, and devote my life to make her happy. The government of the Affghauns was indeed not the most comfortable or secure to live under; but I felt satisfied that by adopting a few simple precautions pointed out by common sense, by avoiding the least appearance of wealth or show, by going but little abroad, and taking especial care to associate with none but persons of whose probity and prudence I could be assured, I might continue to reside in safety, even in the capital itself, surrounded by our oppressors, until some happy change should occur to restore a better state of things. The seeds of revolution were at that time evidently springing up in every quarter, and we have cause to thank the Almighty, that the skill and valour of your General has delivered us from the rod of our oppressors, and seated a native monarch once more upon the throne of Persia."

Such was the story which my friend communicated to me at various times, as leisure and opportunity occurred, but which I have thought it better to give in one unbroken narrative.

In spite of the rigour of the winter, which then was at its height, Nader had no sooner seen

the Shah confirmed on the throne and in the abode of his ancestors, and lent his aid to settle the most pressing business which was entailed upon the conqueror by the change of rulers and of measures throughout the country, than, in order to complete his work, and drive the Affghauns entirely out of Persia, he marched with his army for Sheerauz, where Ashruff, finding himself unpursued, had halted and taken up his quarters, in hopes, as it was given out, of maintaining himself in the province of Fars.

The state of my health rendered me unable to accompany my commander on this expedition, or to yield my slender aid towards gaining those fresh successes, which added another star to the brilliant constellation of his glory. In spite of his losses in men and cattle from the severe cold, he reached the neighbourhood of Sheerauz in twenty days, and after a bloody and decisive action near Zergoon, in which the enemy were routed with great slaughter, he entered the city, from which the few remaining Affghauns had fled in great confusion and in miserable plight. Few indeed of these wretched men escaped to see their country again; and it was not long ere accounts were received that the usurper, after suffering extreme misery, had paid the forfeit of his crimes.

During the progress of these events, I remained

with my friend Meerza Aboo Talib at Ispahan, until, being once more fit for duty, I was ordered to take charge of a detachment returning to Mushed, consisting chiefly of men who had received permission to return to their families, and who were charged with the convoy of a large quantity of prisoners, goods, and treasure.

It was understood that symptoms of disaffection had begun to show themselves in some of the ever-turbulent border districts of Khorasan, and a reinforcement of troops was deemed necessary in that province, until his Highness himself should be able to return there. This he purposed doing before proceeding to humble the pride of the Turks and reduce the rest of Irak to obedience, an undertaking which was already determined upon.

Before quitting Ispahan, I took the precaution of turning into money all the goods and valuables I had received, either as presents or in plunder; and having already had some experience of the uncertain life of a soldier, and the difficulty he has in preserving whatever property he may acquire, I resolved to place the greater part of my worldly possessions in safer hands than my own. Aboo Talib was very prudent: he was rich, and I had the best reason for esteeming him one of my sincerest friends. I had moreover the firmest confidence in his integrity, and felt that if he

would but accept the trust, my property would be perfectly secure against the day of need: at the same time that, should any accident befall me, there was none to whom I was more willing to bequeath it.

"I readily accept your confidence and deposit, my dear Ismael," said Aboo Talib, when I proposed the matter to him; "I commend your prudence in disposing of your money safely, out of reach of the temptations and hazards common to a soldier's life. I rejoice in the confidence with which you honour me, and promise that your property shall not lessen in my hands, so long as I continue alive. But I may die, my friend; and it is right you should have an acknowledgment, properly witnessed, of your deposit. I promise that you shall have one, so formal and binding that neither heir nor Cazee shall find it possible to dispute its truth."

When the time of my departure arrived, and I was taking leave of my friend, he put into my hands a sealed paper. "Here," said he, "is the proper acknowledgment for your money; let me ask, as a proof of your confidence, that you will not open it, at least till you reach Mushed." I readily promised compliance.—"I have one more favour to beg," continued he: "I will not distress you by offers of pecuniary assistance, which at present you do not require; and you

know full well that should the case be altered in future, you may command my purse;—but you must not hurt your friend by refusing a trifling mark of his affectionate regard. The baggage of a soldier should be light, and should contain nothing unbefitting his profession:—you will not transgress this rule by accepting what I have provided.—And now, dearest Ismael, farewell!—I trust we may often meet in future, for even the course of duty may often lead you to Ispahan. But wherever you may go, remember that you have one sincere friend there in Aboo Talib. May God and the Prophet ever protect you!"

The present which he had provided, consisted of a complete suit of the finest armour, of the old fabric of Damascus, made of the hardest steel inlaid and embossed with gold; and comprehended a scymetar and dagger of a water rarely to be equalled, with fire-arms the manufacture of the most cunning Frank artificers, and every implement or utensil useful to a soldier. These were packed in a pair of yekdauns,* and placed upon a powerful baggage mule, all ready for the march. But to one who like myself was enthusiastically fond of horses, the noblest and most gratifying part of this splendid present was an Arab courser, of the best blood to be found in the plains of Nedjeed, and whose limbs of perfect symmetry,

* Travelling trunks.

full dark eye, and nostril of flame, bespoke his high descent. It was a steed that kings might have envied; and kings but seldom bestow upon their greatest favourites so magnificent a gift as the generous Aboo Talib now lavished upon me. But this was not the whole of his munificence. It was not till long afterwards that I thought of examining the acknowledgement which he had given me for my money. I have never been remarkable for attention to my pecuniary concerns, and this paper had lain neglected, almost forgotten, in an old trunk, when stumbling upon it by chance one day, I recollected the charge with which my friend had given it to me:—the time for which he had requested it might remain unopened had long elapsed, and I now broke the seal and examined its contents.

It was a document entitling me, in the most formal manner, to claim either from him or from his heirs, a sum of infinitely greater magnitude than that which I had placed in his hands. The envelope contained these words:—

"Be not surprised, my dear Ismael, at finding the inclosed acknowledgement somewhat different from that which you anticipated. The sum I have specified as your deposit in my hands will be yours at my death, and may be yours at any previous period when you may require or wish to

claim it. May your life be long and your prosperity ever increase!"

May every true believer possess as noble, as honourable, as generous a friend at his need, as Merza Aboo Talib was to me! But in a long and varied pilgrimage through life, I have never met with his like!

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNEXPECTED RENCOUNTER.

The toils and anxieties of my journey drew to a close, and the gilded domes and minarets of Mushed glittered in my view, before the freshness and verdure of spring had given place to the arid heats of summer. Many were the sweet and bitter thoughts that crowded on me, as the scene of so much happiness and so much misery once more greeted my sight. There were feelings and associations connected with this venerable place, which endeared it to me in spite of all I had suffered there; and my heart beat with an unaccountable feeling of delight as I now entered its walls.

No sooner had I disposed of my charge according to instructions, and established myself in comfortable quarters, than I hastened, as every good Sheah is in duty bound, to offer up my prayers and thanksgivings at the holy shrine for the happy termination of my journey.

After quitting the Durgah, as I was passing through the square in front of the great mosque towards the Bazaar, my ears were struck with the cry of "Yahoodee! Yahoodee! a Jew! a cursed Jew! stone him! kill the accursed dog!"—accompanied with much noise and plentiful abuse. The Jew, probably, was wise enough to take the hint and disappear, for the cries soon ceased and the ferment subsided. But the recollection of former scenes was in my mind, and my old adventure, so near the same spot, with the terrible fate of the unhappy Yacoob Yahoodee, was brought forcibly to my remembrance by the circumstance. "Poor wretch!" exclaimed I mentally—"and his grateful generous brother! I wonder if he yet lives—if he still resides in this city." Emotions of lively kindness rose in my mind as these thoughts passed through it, and I resolved that very hour to seek his dwelling.

The spot where it had stood was found without difficulty, but the miserable hovel was there no longer—a heap of ruined walls was all that remained of it. It was a bad omen; but I did not abandon the search, and advanced farther into the Jewish Muhuleh* than I had ever done before, in quest of some one who might give me the information I required. Some children at play were the first living things I saw; and upon the alarm they

* Quarter, division.

gave, an ill-looking man came forth, who, eyeing me suspiciously, requested to learn my commands. He affected utter ignorance on the subject of my enquiries, and declared that he knew no person in the muhuleh such as I described Abisham to be. Several other persons came up while we were talking, and listened to what was passing; among the rest, an old woman, who, after having heard some sentences, began to consider me attentively—"And what can a young Persian officer, as your dress and air proclaim you to be, require with a miserable Jew, who has long since breathed his last in a distant land?" said she, after a while.—"Abisham dead?" exclaimed I, struck with surprise and sorrow at her words,—"is it then so?—am I too late?—what then has become of his family?—where are the children of his brother Yacoob?"—"And who may you be that put these questions?" repeated she, impatiently: "what know you of Abisham or his family?"—"What do *I* know?" rejoined I,—"if *you* know aught of Abisham, you must have heard of his brother's unfortunate fate. But stay; perhaps you may recognize this signet," added I, recollecting and producing the emerald ring given me by Abisham, which I constantly carried as a talisman about my person; "if you do, it will explain to you that I can mean him no harm by these enquiries."

The old woman started and threw herself at

my feet when she saw the ring. "I know it, I know it well," cried she; "it is the signet of my master's house, and now do I remember him who bears it:—yes, my Lord, I recollect your features well, although they have changed from those of youth to manhood since that terrible day!"

"This is a friend," said she, turning to the bystanders, who were gazing in doubtful wonder:—"there is nothing now to dread, and I will instantly take him to my master. Alas! noble sir, Abisham the Jew still lives, though his days, even his hours, are numbered. But it will gladden his soul to see you, for often has he talked of you, and breathed many an earnest wish that he might see you once more before he should be gathered to his fathers."

A wonderful change was to be seen in the conduct of the spectators; they bowed themselves with profound respect, and made room for me as the old woman led the way to the dwelling of her master. It was a miserable tenement, patched up among some ruins in the centre of this once populous quarter: no small pains had been taken to deprive it of a habitable look, and in order to arrive at it, we had to traverse some very narrow and offensive passages.

I found the unfortunate Abisham stretched upon his couch, in a condition that too plainly declared how near he was to the end of his earthly

career. His cheeks were hollow and wan; and his sunken lustreless eye wandered around in vacancy. As we approached, the old woman addressed him in a language of which nothing was intelligible to me except my own name, which she pronounced as she presented me to the dying man. A slight flush overspread his cheek, and a gleam of intelligence lighted up his eye, as it rested on my features with a glance of recognition. "My lord Ismael! can it be?" said he after a pause, with a hollow and sepulchral voice;—"the God of my fathers has heard my prayer, and sent the only man of all his nation who may soften for me the bitterness of death. I am dying, noble Ismael; —bethink you on your former goodness to a poor Jew, recollect your benevolent promises, and by confirming them relieve the mind of a man who will soon have done with this world. Remember the orphans whom you vowed to protect, and who will now become totally bereaved; promise that you will not abandon them!"—I was greatly affected by this scene: the charge which the unhappy man required me to accept was a serious one; but how could I refuse it?—I did remember my former promise; I remembered, too, his confiding reliance in my humanity, and how little it had been in my power to show myself worthy of it: honour as well as inclination prompted me to make some return, while all the better feelings of

my nature urged me to soothe the last moments of a dying man. I swore to him solemnly, that so far as my power might extend, his poor orphans should receive from me protection and support. That oath was no empty form, for in my own heart I vowed to keep it, in spirit and in letter, so long as life remained. The energy with which this promise was given, was a cordial to the dying Abisham, which for a time revived his fleeting spirits. He spoke to me of the changes and misfortunes to which he had been subjected since he last had seen me, and communicated the views he had entertained for the future provision of his orphan nephews. I remained conversing with him for a long time, and left him more cheerful and composed than he had been for many weeks.

The sum of Abisham's story was as follows. The enmity of Meerza Jaffier did not cease with the death of his brother Yacoob. The Meerza was aware that the debt he owed to the deceased, might still be claimed by his heirs, and resolved to leave no means untried to rid himself of this incumbrance, if it should cost the destruction of the whole family. In fact the Moollahs and Ahons* had taken the interference they had already met with in this affair so ill, that the Meerza found it easy to exasperate them to any extent he pleased; and they resolved to make sure of their victims as

* Ahon is another term for Moollah.

soon as the obstacles which held them in check should be removed. A course of determined persecution was commenced; and though for awhile the effects of this were warded off by means of large bribes, and an attempt was subsequently made on the part of the Jews to obtain the protection of a high authority, it was all in vain, and nothing remained but to seek for safety to life and property in flight. This, however, the health of Abisham was unequal to, and recourse was therefore had to concealment of the strictest nature. A retreat was prepared among certain extensive ruins in the Muhuleh, to which the persecuted family retired, while it was industriously given out that they had fled to their friends at Herat. A party of the Moollahs, their oppressors, accompanied by several officers of government, entered the Muhuleh to enquire into the truth of the report; they were baffled in their search, and vented their anger on the deserted walls, which were reduced to heaps of ruins.

Since that time, Abisham, with his nephews and two or three servants, of whom the old woman was the principal, had lived almost totally immured in this wretched retreat, till ill health and chagrin had reduced him to the brink of the grave. His misery was increased by an acute sense of the unprotected state in which he was about to leave

his little orphans. "It is not the means of support that they will require," said he; "there is enough even in this city, in spite of all our losses, to give them a comfortable subsistence; and in other places there are still larger resources, which will belong to them;—but who is there that can be intrusted with the substance of orphans? Though faith be better kept among us than among many a people less oppressed than we are, the temptation might prove too great for any of my kindred. One there is, indeed, but he is far distant: his years are many too—alas, it is impossible! On you alone, my Lord, must the poor Jew rely for justice and protection for his children; and so may the God of your fathers support you in misfortune, and soothe your dying hour, as you perform the promise which has this day shed its consolation over mine!"

Thanks be to Allah! I can say that this has been done. I have performed my duty to these orphans, and their father's spirit may rest in peace. While I saw them advance in beauty and in talents as in years, it was to me a pleasure greater than I can describe, to add to their comforts and promote their interests. And amply have I been repaid for all I ever did, for to me they have been always affectionate and grateful; and the darker hours of after-life were often cheered by a glow of comfort and consolation, from reflecting that what-

ever might have been my follies or my faults to others, I had at least performed the promise which I made to Abisham the Jew.

Nothing worth relating had occurred for some time after my arrival in Mushed, when, strolling idly one afternoon by the Oosbeck caravanserai, and amusing myself with watching the crowds of people who frequented this great depôt, my attention was arrested by an exclamation of distress at no great distance, accompanied by some words in a female voice, and in the Tekeh language. They were uttered by a young woman in the Toorkoman dress, who, it appeared, in turning down a narrow lane close by, with a small tray of provisions in her hands, had been jostled by a surly porter, so rudely as to cause her to drop her burthen. An emotion of compassion for her distress, together with a certain kindly feeling which always stirred within me at the sight of the Toorkoman garb, led me to go and enquire what ailed her. But I had no sooner begun to speak, than the girl started back and stood gazing at me with a countenance full of doubt and amazement.—"Holy Prophet!" said she at last, regardless of my questions,—"is it possible?—am I mad or dreaming?—or is it the spirit of Ismael that stands before me?" I was startled in my turn, not less by the sound of her voice than by her exclamations; and replied with a surprise little inferior to

her own, "Yes, child! you are not mistaken: my name, no doubt, is Ismael, and though I cannot recollect yours, the sound of your voice as well as your language is familiar to me; for I also have lived in the Desert, and have not forgotten the language of its tribes."

"Our language too!" exclaimed the girl with increased eagerness,—"there can be no mistake,—it must be himself,—and yet, alive! and in Mushed too! Oh! holy Fatimah, what a blessing is this! Dearest mistress, you will live now,—all will be well again! Ah, my lord! you must come with me immediately, if you would hear of one who, once was very dear to you;—if you would see her alive, lose not a moment, but follow me."—"Stay! hold! what mean you?" exclaimed I with equal earnestness: "of whom do you speak, and who are you that thus recall, in language and in look, the memory of my youthful days?"—"Oh! for the sake of all you best love, delay no longer!" interrupted the girl, losing sight of my impatient curiosity in her own eager anticipations: "we shall be late; I can stay no longer from my mistress; come, I intreat you come!"—"Your mistress! and who then is your mistress?" cried I, trembling with inexplicable forebodings.—"My mistress!" repeated the girl; "and know you not Sitarah, the little captive whom you gave to Shireen?—who should be my mistress but her?"

Although from the first moment of his interview I had felt a wild and thrilling fancy, which, like the presentiment of something strange and awful, flitted over my mind, and made me tremble while I almost anticipated the import of her tidings, —still, when at last she uttered them so plainly, they stunned me like the bursting of a thunderbolt. Shireen! my long lost, ever loved Shireen in Mushed! and in danger!—dying perhaps!—my head grew dizzy, and I could scarce articulate a word. "Lead on, lead on!" cried I, in a voice scarcely intelligible: "lose not another moment!" and I followed her with hasty steps, as she glided swiftly before me to a cluster of miserable huts at no great distance.

She entered a small mud-walled court, and, running forward through a mean apartment into an inner chamber of still more wretched description, she pushed aside the ragged curtain which hung before a door, and addressing herself to a figure which lay extended upon a pallet in one corner of the room, exclaimed, "Good news, my dear mistress—I bring you tidings of joy! He is come! he is here! your misery is at an end: your own Ismael is here—he will protect us, you will recover, and we shall all be happy again!"

A piercing shriek from the couch was all the reply; but it froze my very blood and fixed every

faculty with painful intensity upon the scene before me. I did not gaze thus long; my heart would have spoken had my straining eyes even failed to discover the truth. On a squalid couch, surrounded with misery and poverty in all its forms, pale, emaciated, and dying as it seemed, lay the wasted form of my once blooming, lovely, and still fondly-loved Shireen! Heedless of every other object, in a tumult of remorse, apprehension, and joy, I threw myself upon the couch, and elasped her in my arms—but, alas! she was unconscious of my caresses—cold and motionless, she lay as one already dead—I thought she was indeed no more, and, overcome with grief and horror, fell insensible upon her body.

Recollection soon returned to me, and with it bitter anguish; the cries of poor Sitarah now restored me to my senses, and I revived to the keenest sense of the catastrophe which, as I believed, had taken place, and of which I upbraided myself as the cause. But it was long indeed before the skill of those about her could restore the exhausted Shireen to animation; and the most sanguine thought for a time that the spirit had fled for ever. Better hopes at length arose; some long heavy sighs burst from her breast, and, slowly opening her eyes, she gazed around with a bewildered look, as if in quest of something. Eager as I was to see the first evidences of re-

viving life, I had yet sufficient sense to comply with the request of the attendants, and to withdraw from the couch until Shireen should be better prepared to receive me.

"Where is he?" at last she uttered slowly—"what has become of him? Surely he was here! or was it a dream? Have I been asleep?—yes! it must have been a dream, for I thought he stood by my couch, and that Sitarah called him by his name, and said he came to make me happy again!—but then darkness fell upon me, and I saw no more! I am very weak!" added she after a pause—"I am worse, I think. Surely something has happened?—perhaps I am dying!—well, it is better so for me—I do not wish to live!—But, alas! my brother, that thy glorious day should be overcast so soon!"

"You are not dying, dear mistress," said Sitarah, still weeping and trembling at the effects of her imprudent zeal, and eager to repair her error. "Something has happened, indeed, but it is a joyful not a sorrowful event."—"Hush!" said an old woman, who had been active in her attentions to Shireen: "be quiet, or you will kill her outright. See you not that the breath flutters in her nostrils, uncertain whether to stay or to depart. Retire all of you, and, as you value her life, leave me alone with her." The air of authority with which she uttered this, was suited to the emer-

gency, and had the proper effect: we felt she was right, and withdrew, leaving her only with the exhausted Shireen, who now lay quietly gazing upwards, as if awaiting the death which she believed so near.

I could not bear this horrid stillness:—life seemed ebbing away without an effort to arrest its flight. "Can nothing then be done?" cried I in agony to those around me; "are there no physicians to be had—no cordials to revive her?" "Physicians there are, no doubt, and cordials too, for those who can purchase them," replied one; "but where shall miserable captives, who have been plundered of all they possessed, find the means of procuring them? This poor girl, whose fate seems to interest you so deeply, is dying from the effects of hardship and want; for we, who have scarce the means of subsistence, cannot afford her the nourishment or the remedies which her condition requires." Pierced to the soul by this cruel intelligence, I offered every thing I had about me, and implored that not a moment might be lost in getting all that might afford any hope of saving her life, or could increase her comforts. "How are we to obtain them?" replied the women, —we are prisoners as well as strangers in Mushed, and are not permitted to quit this place; nor, even if we were, could we find what you require in the confusion of these extensive bazaars and

endless multitude of houses." They spoke the truth; I felt it:—there was no alternative but to tear myself from the spot, and fly in search of more effectual aid; nor did I rest until I had summoned all the physicians of greatest name, and crowded the miserable hovel with every convenience and comfort I could think of. In effecting this, a considerable time was spent in spite of my eager anxiety to be at the bedside of Shireen; but perhaps it was a fortunate delay, for on my return I found, that, somewhat revived by a cordial which had been administered, she had again questioned those about her regarding what had occurred. With most tender and commendable caution, the old woman had taken the opportunity to inform her by degrees, that what she had seen and heard was no dream, but a happy reality; that I had indeed been beside her, and had only left the house to procure her the assistance she so greatly required. Her agitation on hearing these tidings had been less violent, and her enfeebled frame seemed now more able to support the weight of joy which had overwhelmed her at first—she had become more composed, and was anxious to see me, to ascertain the truth by the evidence of her own senses. "You may now approach her," said the old nurse, "but be cautious, as you value her life—speak but little—do not agitate her—remain not long. Joy, like many

precious medicines, if administered with prudence, soothes and benefits the patient; but used with rashness or in excess, it becomes a fatal poison."

Pale and motionless as death itself, Shireen still lay extended on the couch; but a ray of intelligence beamed in her eye, and fancy almost persuaded me that her cheek bore the first faint token of returning health. An increased degree of comfort was visible about her; odours of healing virtue perfumed the apartment, and cordials of powerful efficacy stood ready for her use. Hope revived in my breast, as kneeling down beside her and gently clasping her fragile form in my arms, I kissed her pale lips, and breathed a prayer that Allah would have mercy and restore her to me! "Ah! dearest Ismael," said she, faintly returning my caress, "I shall now die in peace, if I must die, since Allah has granted me the blessing of seeing you once more; and yet I could wish to live a little longer now—it is hard to part with you again, so soon, and for ever!" "Shireen, dearest Shireen! do not speak thus, you will live now—for my sake you will live, and we shall never part again! The merciful Allah would not have reunited us but to part us for ever at the moment of our meeting. But compose yourself; you must be silent for the present: I will sit by your bed and watch you."—"Ah Ismael! to see you there is a more powerful cordial than any

drug that riches can produce. But I have suffered so much!—you know not what has happened—we all have suffered. Alas! few of those whom you knew, survive to mourn their losses—and it is wonderful that I, the weakest of them all, have survived the total wreck of my family!—Poor Selim!"—"What of him, Shireen?—in the name of Heaven, say not that he is dead!"—"No, oh no!—he lives as yet; but how long he may be suffered to exist I cannot tell. I have not breath to tell you now;—but he is a captive like myself—taken, wounded and overwhelmed by numbers, the last of his house—those about me can tell you all—I cannot:—but save him, dearest Ismael! if you have any power, spare it not for him who saved your life and mine, at the risk of his own."—Her voice grew faint again, and she nearly relapsed into insensibility. The nurse once more interfered; and a grave-looking physician, who had been sitting in a corner unobserved by me, issued his commands against any farther conversation.

This Hakeem commenced a grave discussion upon the causes of his patient's malady, its symptoms and possible consequences, explaining the nature of cold and hot sympathies, and introducing many learned observations upon the effect of planetary influences in human diseases. His harangue was lost upon me, but concluded by a hint conveyed in quaint and figurative, but sufficiently

intelligible terms, that he expected a munificent recompense for the learning and skill he had displayed in behalf of his patient. I bade him be at ease upon that score, and apply the full powers of his mind to the recovery of his patient, who was once more reviving under the salutary influence of another cordial. I besought her to compose herself, and to divest her mind of all anxiety about her brother —"Leave him to my care," said I; "I will seek him out, and rely upon it his life shall be safe, even should my own be the sacrifice: think only of your own health, dearest Shireen, and remember, that if you be restored to us, by the blessing of Allah, all may yet be well." Strictly charging the nurse, who proved to be both skilful and trustworthy, to prevent the entrance of every one except the physician, and never to quit her patient, I left the house to make enquiries about Selim.

I soon learned from the other Toorkoman prisoners, that during the late disturbances among the Desert tribes, which had embroiled the whole north of Khorasan, the branch of Tekehs which occupied the Desert west of Merve, had been very severely handled. Some aouls, they told me, had been totally destroyed; and among others, that which dwelt at the Chushmah Jemallee had been utterly swept away. Among the few prisoners that were taken in the desperate strife was Selim, overpowered by numbers, and sorely wounded,

with one or two remaining members of his family; and he was, they said, at this very time confined, with others of his nation, in a small caravanserai near the palace—which, in consequence of its strength, had been converted for the time into a prison,—there to remain strictly guarded until the pleasure of Nader concerning them should be known.

I lost not a moment in going to this caravanserai; but upon desiring permission to enter and see my friend, I was told that the orders regarding these prisoners were so precise, that no one could be allowed to approach them. I flew to the officer who had charge of the prison, and with whom I was slightly acquainted, but he gave me the same reply.—" These prisoners," said he, " have been guilty of aggravated treason. His Highness is much exasperated against them, and has given the most unqualified orders that no one whatever shall have access to, or be permitted to communicate with them, either by word or letter."—" But he never would have included me in this prohibition," said I. " You know who I am; I will answer for no ill consequence arising from the indulgence I require."—" I know you well, Sir," replied the officer, " and I would willingly comply with your wishes; but my orders are imperative—no one may see the prisoners."—" What!" replied I, with rising displeasure, " you know me

for a confidential servant of his Highness, for an officer high in his regard, and yet you refuse me permission only to see and converse with a Toorkoman captive!"—"I but obey my orders," replied he; "besides, that captive is no insignificant person; his courage and his influence have caused more serious loss, and given more trouble to the General's troops, than they have experienced from any of the rebellious tribes. The anger of Nader is kindled; and, if I should dare to speculate upon the intentions of my master, I should say that the death of all, and his more particularly, is certain."—"His death!" cried I; "the death of Selim fixed! By the head of Nader himself, and by the holy Kaaba! it cannot be;—it must not, and it shall not be. Give way! I must see him, and that immediately."—"By your favour, but you must not," replied the officer, firmly but respectfully;—"it may not be. I would willingly oblige you in any thing that is reasonable; but neither for you, nor for any living man, will I disobey the orders of Nader. By the sword of Allee! my head would sit but loosely on my shoulders were I to be so weak; and you, Sir, might chance to lose a trifle of the favour you presume so much upon, when you think it can license you to break the rules of him who bestowed it upon you."

Maddened with disappointment at meeting so stout and unlooked-for an opposition in a matter

wherein my feelings were so deeply interested, I became furious and unreasonable; but the steady and temperate resistance of the officer at length brought me to my senses, and I was constrained to admit that he acted just as I should have thought myself bound to do in similar circumstances.

I then besought him to convey a simple message to his prisoner; but even this he scrupled to consent to. I was unwilling needlessly to explain the nature of my connexion with Selim; but in hopes of interesting his good nature in his prisoner's favour, even although he should persist in refusing to convey him either letter or message, I confided to him some of the circumstances of my early life, calculated to convince him that my business with Selim had no connexion with his political conduct. This was a more rational way of going to work. Satisfied with having brought me to reason, and proud of the steadiness with which he had maintained his point of duty, he suffered himself more readily to be touched with my narrative, and promised to show every kindness in his power to my friend. He even agreed to give him a slip of paper, open, and containing a few words, to which he should himself be privy; and assured me that every comfort and indulgence, compatible with strict confinement, should be afforded him. The paper contained

only these words: "A trusty friend watches over the safety of Shireen, and will not neglect that of Selim. Let not his heart, therefore, fail him, nor let his spirits be cast down; for the sun of happiness may break through the clouds of misfortune when they are darkest, and an army will sometimes appear from a quarter whence not even a horseman was expected."

The officer farther pledged himself, that so long as the prisoners were left in his charge, not a man should be harmed, or even examined, without my receiving intimation; and that he would watch with peculiar care over the safety of my friend. With these assurances I was forced to be content, and to wait, with what patience I might, till the arrival of Nader should enable me to try the extent of my influence with him, and obtain the life of Selim whatever it might cost.

A few days produced a very favourable change in the condition of Shireen. Acute mental suffering, with extreme bodily fatigue, aggravated by want and misery, had reduced her to the state in which I found her, and which probably, in a few hours more, would have terminated her existence. When one principal source of anxiety was removed by the prospect I held out of her brother's ultimate safety,—when a hope of better times dawned upon her through the chaos of misery which had surrounded her for so long,—and when the buoy-

ancy of youth, and the strength of a good constitution thus gained scope to act, health gradually re-animated her exhausted frame, and our fears for her life were removed. Before a week had elapsed, Shireen and the females attached to her were removed through my influence into more suitable lodgings, and surrounded with every comfort. As her strength returned, and the danger of agitating her by conversation abated, I entreated her to inform me of all that had occurred, from the moment of my quitting her in so critical a situation, until that when I chanced to be recognized by her slave, and became the fortunate instrument of preserving her life. I had already gathered a good deal from other quarters, but as her information comprehended the greater part of all I collected on the subject, I shall put the whole together, and give it in the shape of a continuous narrative, and chiefly in her own words.

CHAPTER VIII.

STORY OF SHIREEN.

"On that terrible day when we met for the last time near the pleasant Chushmah Jemallee,—a day which surely neither of us can ever forget,—my spirits, which, as you may recollect, had been low for many days, were even more depressed than usual. I remember, Ismael, that you rallied me upon it; but soothed me and caressed me when you saw that I could not repress my tears. On reaching the tents after parting with you, I was met by Kawleh, the Khanum's old slave, who always hated me,—with an ominous scowl, in which my quickened apprehension detected a glance of malignant triumph. 'Welcome home, young woman,' said she; 'your place has been void;* my mistress has enquired for you.' Conscience-stricken as I was already,

* That is—you have been missed, a complimentary expression used here in derision.

her words completed my alarm; and it was in no degree diminished by the storm which I saw lowering on the Khanum's brow. 'How now, Shireen!' she began; 'how come you thus to neglect your duty,—the business of the family? Whence do you come? what have you been about?' Confounded and distressed by questions so unseasonable and perplexing, as well as by the penetrating look with which they were accompanied, I could give no satisfactory reply; but muttering some incoherent excuse, I attempted to pass onward to my own part of the tent. But I was not permitted to escape thus. 'Stay, girl!' said the Khanum, in a stern voice; 'stay! and answer me more distinctly—Where have you been? who was your companion? and what have you been about? There are strange reports regarding you, young woman!' added she, after a pause; 'and I intend, before we part, to know what truth may be in them!'—I tried to look her in the face, and to ask in the tone of innocence, what these reports might be? and what reason she could have for doubting my discretion; but I could not do it: my limbs trembled under me; my tongue refused its office; and my eye quailed under her stern and searching gaze. Oh, Ismael! how dreadful is the weight of guilt upon the soul!—how terrible the consciousness of a secret crime! The burthen of mine

bowed me to the earth! The Khanum saw my confusion, and pursued her advantage. 'What! dumb? am I to conclude that all is true, then? Hah! girl! have you then sunk so low? Must I name the miscreant? But thy father will soon be here, and we shall see how the Kuzzilbash dog—ay, and his meek Shireen—will endure his fury!'

"I heard no more—my worst fears seemed now to be realized; the terrible thought of my father's wrath, and of the bloody revenge he would take upon you, dear Ismael, overpowered me. My head reeled, and I fell deprived of sense to the ground, at the feet of the Khanum. This unlucky swoon led to the full disclosure of my shame. Hitherto, it seems, they only knew of our attachment;—they had detected our secret intercourse, but not its full extent. The measures which they, not very delicately, employed to restore me to life, exposed the fatal lengths to which it had been carried.

"What passed while I continued thus insensible I know not; the first sound I heard was the voice of Selim endeavouring to persuade his mother to control the loudness of her indignation.—'It cannot be concealed,' did he say, 'if you are so violent. Can you think, mother, that I feel the disgrace which has fallen upon us less than you do?—but is it to be remedied by publishing it to the whole camp? Will my father thank you for

doing so? I ask you, would my father be pleased to hear that the shame which he would wish to be buried in the bowels of the earth, has been declared to all the world by the rash violence of his own wife's tongue?'—'Your father!" repeated she with fury; 'no fear but your father shall know the whole story;—a fine opinion it will give him of his favourite daughter!—the darling whom he has thought fit to prefer even to the children of me, his lawful wife! But he is well served for his folly; and I too am fitly rewarded for my weakness, in agreeing to regard her like my own, as I did.'

"'With that, mother, I shall not interfere; but, as the representative of my father in his absence, I call upon you to be discreet, as he would have you be. Let Shireen be closely confined until his arrival; be silent to the world; caution Kawleh, who seems as yet to be the only person aware of the matter, against uttering a single word that may excite suspicion, and let nothing more be done until he returns.'—'Well, my son, you may be right; but how can any one be quiet when such doings are carried on before our very faces? And what is to become of that vile Kuzzilbash? I insist upon his being secured,—I will not be disappointed of my revenge on him: however weakly the Khan may act with regard to

his daughter, he surely will wreak his vengeance on her betrayer.'

"'Mother! the honour of Omer Khan is in his own keeping; and woe betide him or her who shall assert that he requires either aid or advice in protecting it from insult! Leave Ismael to me: he has gone to some distance from the camp to-day, and may not return till late; when he comes I shall know how to act. But we must be prudent: his attachment to Shireen was notorious; and should any measure of severity be exercised towards him while she appears to be under displeasure, conclusions discreditable to the family would undoubtedly be drawn. Be calm then, mother, and allow me to converse with this unhappy girl alone.'

"Trembling with terror, I had shrunk from the violence of the Khanum, and was pressing close to Selim for protection as he uttered the last words; and although scarce able to move, I gladly exerted my failing limbs to drag me from the presence of his mother, as he led me to my own quarter of the tent, where, quite exhausted with agitation, I sank upon the couch in utter hopeless misery.

"'Well may you weep! well may you tremble!' said Selim, after a pause; 'but neither tears nor terror can remove the disgrace your guilt has brought upon us all, nor avert the consequences of your crime. If female modesty, which you have outraged; if the honour of your family, which

your conduct has so foully tarnished—if the thoughts of the anguish you were preparing for a brother who loved you so well, were not motives strong enough to keep you in the path of innocence and virtue, how could you have disregarded the certain, the terrible wrath of your father, or forgot the bloody tragedy which must surely ensue upon a discovery not to be avoided?'

"Bitter as were my brother's words, I sought not to interrupt him; but throwing myself at his feet I clung to him in despair, and at last, when the heavy sobs that shook my frame would let me, I exclaimed, 'Hear me, Selim, while I have life and strength to utter it!—hear me, brother, for the last time, if it must be so—I acknowledge all my guilt—nor does the misery I now endure require the aggravation of your bitter upbraidings—but, thank God! it will soon have an end, and the shame which I have brought upon you, will pass away with my wretched life—for I am dying, Selim! I feel that it is so—and if your mother will but wait a little while, the miserable creature whom she has spurned, will cease to live, without the need of murder, and her indignation, her hatred will be quenched by my death.—But, while I can, let me do justice to the innocent:—Ismael is not to blame!—no, my brother, though it be true that he is the author of my present unhappy situation, I take Heaven to witness that he never sought to seduce me. You

know, dear Selim, how Ismael and I were brought up together—no brother and sister could have enjoyed more unrestrained liberty of intercourse; for during our infant years he was as a child of the family.—You know how many acts of kindness combined with his noble and amiable qualities to make me love him, spite of the difference of our stations; —you know, too, how sternly our innocent and open intimacy was broken off. I will not attempt to justify the secret intercourse which we indulged in, when we dared no longer to meet in public; but I can answer for both, that neither entertained a thought of the fatal consequences which followed. We were indeed too simple and ignorant to do so. But to these unfortunate circumstances—to the concealment which was thus forced upon us, is to be attributed our fall.—Is our guilt, then, so very heinous, Selim? Oh, I am sure you cannot think so. But if a sacrifice must be made, let it be her who has no wish to survive her shame, and not that Ismael who has shed his blood for Selim—who has so long served his father with unswerving fidelity.'

"'I must believe you, Shireen. I do not think the frank and noble nature of Ismael could have conceived so black a treachery, even had he overlooked the consequences inevitable on detection, and forgot the ruin it must necessarily bring on your head, as well as on his own;—he loved you

too well for that. Nor need you remind me of his devotion to your brother: the proofs of it can never be effaced from his memory. Be comforted: he shall be saved, if either my skill or influence can effect it; but we must be speedy: should my father return and find him here, no living thing could stop the torrent of his wrath.'—'Oh, yes! dearest Selim; you must be speedy indeed:—let him instantly fly—let not an hour be lost. Oh, were he once safe, with what goodwill could I lie down and die; and would to God that it could be before my father's return!—for, oh! my brother, I shrink from the thought of his fury!—I would not—I would not perish by his hand!—that would be too dreadful.'

"'No, my poor Shireen! by the mercy of Allah, you shall not die!' said Selim, with a troubled voice, for his heart was melted by my misery. 'I trust in the Almighty you will live; and for your father's anger, trust me, I shall find means to turn it aside: you shall not feel it!—why should he break a heart already wounded? No! have courage, my dear sister, you shall yet see better days—it were sad, indeed, if your sweet and lovely morning were to be so soon overcast for ever. But I must leave you now—remain here in peace, for no one shall dare to harm you. I go to provide for the safety of the unfortunate and imprudent Ismael.'

"I have not related to you half of all that passed at this long and painful interview, my dear Ismael; nor is it possible for me to describe to you the misery which I suffered, and which forced tears even from the eyes of Selim. He left me relieved from the first gush of despair, but plunged in a degree of anxiety for your safety, which was, I think, more insufferable than the worst certainty could have been. The consequences to me were only those which might have been anticipated; racking pains throughout my whole frame, accompanied with deadly sickness, and fits of burning heat and shuddering cold, announced that the hopes of a mother were to be prematurely blasted. The hopes, did I say? Alas! I had no hopes. How could I wish my child to inherit the shame and misery which were all I could bequeath it? I prayed that neither might survive. Your child, Ismael, never saw the light; and for many days its wretched mother lay between life and death, like a thing neither fit for earth nor heaven!—But Selim did not abandon me. When he parted with you, he brought me the grateful tidings of your escape; and I could pray to Allah for blessings on your path,—though even with death so near in view, my heart swelled with a bitter pang, at the thought that I should never see you more. Oh, Ismael! it was a dreadful time!—Except my brother, there were none to soothe me—none that

cared for me; and many were about me, that hoped I never might recover. But Selim did not suffer these to come nigh; he gave me in charge of two women from among the household, on whose kindness he could depend; and thus did matters continue until my father returned.

"It was on the evening of the fourth day after the events I have related, that shouts and distant tumult announced the Khan's return. The cold sweat stood upon my brow, and my heart died within me as I heard it; for I knew that my worst trial was at hand, and pale and motionless I lay awaiting it. The trampling and neighing of horses, the bustle and buzz of voices approached. I recognized those of several persons whom I knew; and soon the loud and cheerful accents of my father thrilled to my heart, as he replied to the congratulations of his family, who now poured out to meet him. He retired to his tent; and its thin walls did not prevent me from distinguishing the voices of my mother, and Selim, in earnest conversation with him. Once or twice I thought they swelled into a louder key; and a fresh shudder of terror came over me, as I believed my hour was come, and tried to prepare myself for the awful storm about to burst upon me. But the voices died away by degrees;—silence ensued in the tent, the hum and buzz of the camp alone was heard, and I continued unmolested and alone.

"For three days after this I neither saw Selim nor my father. On the morning of the fourth, when the violence of my alarm had a little subsided, and I was lying, worn out and still struggling for life, upon my solitary couch, I heard the sound of footsteps. Lifting my languid eyes, they fell upon my father, who, led by Selim, was slowly approaching me. Terror, no less than weakness, deprived me of power to utter the faintest cry, and, clasping my hands instinctively, I lay awaiting my doom. But a glance at the countenance of Selim reassured me; for it smiled on me with an expression of benevolence not unmingled with apprehension, as he said, 'Shireen, your father is come to bestow upon you his forgiveness; receive it with the humility and thankfulness which is due to him.'

"The flush of anger that rose to my father's weather-beaten and agitated brow, as he entered the tent, gave way to a gaze of pity and alarm, when he turned his eyes upon my pale and almost lifeless figure. In no small agitation he turned to Selim: 'How is this?' said he, 'is she in truth so ill? —good God! she is dying!—Shireen, my poor girl! have no fears for your father;—I forgive you; I forgive you heartily—only try to recover. Curses on the wretches! they have frightened her to death,' muttered he, observing the terror which his kindness could not at once subdue; 'and double

curses on the villain who has reduced her to this dreadful plight !'

"'Blessings be upon you, my father!' said I, faintly, 'for your unmerited kindness to a wretch like me;—it will smooth my path to the grave; for I could not have died in peace with your curse upon me. But oh! my father, if you would indeed give ease to a broken heart, take that curse also from one who is less guilty than I;—let not your malediction light upon the orphan whom you reared and protected so long—who would have shed his blood like water to do you good.'

"The angry flush again returned, and Selim's countenance became clouded with anxiety. 'Now, by the head of the Prophet! name not the miscreant! speak not of him, if you be wise,' cried the Khan in a terrible voice: 'Well is it for him that my son, in his prudence, took measures to secure him from my vengeance;—his blood had else been surely on my hand! I am not sorry to have avoided that; but name not a traitor, who has betrayed the hand that fed him!'

"'My father,' replied I calmly, for my terror had begun to abate; 'the world will soon be nothing to me; and what would it avail me to die with a lie in my mouth? The youth whom you would load with your curse, however inconsiderate, however worthy he may be of blame, was never either treacherous or ungrateful;—

he loved you as a father, and would have given his life to repair the evil which arose from our mutual folly and inexperience, not from his premeditated guilt. Bethink you, my father, of the many proofs you have seen of Ismael's devotion to your family; be persuaded that he never willingly wronged you; and do not add to the misery of your dying daughter, by a malediction which, though aimed at him, would surely light on her head!

" 'Well, well, my daughter, be at peace! wonder not that a Tekeh chief should find it hard to forgive the destroyer of his child. Had he not been a fool!—but why think of that?—it is too late now. By the head of my father! the youth was brave; and, in spite of all that has passed, may I never see the gates of Paradise if I do not regret his loss! Selim, you did well; you acted wisely: I am a hasty fool, and, had it not been for you, I might have done that of which I should have repented!—Let this poor girl be kindly cared for.—God bless you, my daughter! you must live for the sake of your father, who freely forgives you for all the distress he has suffered on your account!'

" Thus passed the interview which I dreaded so much. I need not tell you, that to the kind zeal of Selim alone I was indebted for the conciliatory character it had assumed; for at first

the fury of the Khan had been almost ungovernable.

"When the approach of his party to the camp was announced, Selim took care to be among the first to meet him; and he accompanied his father in close attendance to the tents. The Khanum, with the women of the family, met him, as usual, at the entrance; but a purposely assumed constraint in the manner of the former was not long in attracting his attention. 'What is the matter, Khanum?' said he: 'what cloud is lowering on your brow?—And you too, Kawleh, you look gloomy and disconcerted: what means all this? has any thing unlucky happened?—Where is Shireen?' continued he, after a moment's pause, in which he cast his eyes around the circle: 'she was not used to be the last to welcome her father!—what has become of her?'—'Shireen is sick!' was the Khanum's brief reply.—'Sick!—what? how?—what ails her?—when was she taken ill?—where is she?'—'When my lord shall be alone,' replied the Khanum, mysteriously, 'he shall learn all!' and she led the way to the inner tent, followed only by Selim and old Kawleh.

"'It grieves me, Khan, to greet you with heavy tidings,' began the lady; 'but strange and most unfortunate events have come to light during your absence from camp. You may, perhaps, miss

another of the family, who, till now, was ever among the first to congratulate you on your safe return.'—'Why hast thou become a bird of bad omen, to meet me thus on my return with bodings of evil?' said the Khan, impatiently. 'Speak out at once! say, what is the matter?—miss another of the family?'—muttered he slowly, after another scrutinizing glance around.—'It is true—I do miss one—where is Ismael? why is he not here?—Hah!—surely!—' He stopped and bent his eyes upon his son, and then upon the Khanum, with an expression of kindling fury, so dark and fearful, that his wife quailed beneath it, and shrank from the task she had so readily undertaken. 'My father, I entreat you to be calm!' said Selim, who now stood forward and addressed him: 'control your feelings;—if you would preserve that character for wisdom and prudence which has placed you so high among your people, exert them now, for our tidings are but too well calculated to excite your wrath.' The gesture of impatience which the Khan could not repress, augured but ill for his powers of self-control; but the words of his son had produced their effect, and he restrained his vehemence by a strong and painful effort.—'Say on, my son, and fear me not—I am calm—be thy tidings what they may, I shall curb my feelings—only tell me what has happened—torment me no longer with suspense.'

—'Your daughter!' said Selim, with anxious solemnity,—'the penetration of my father has not been deceived; the strong, the culpable attachment'—'Hah! sayest thou?' interrupted the Khan, stamping on the ground with kindling eyes, 'Staffer-ullah! is it true then?—but no, no!—it cannot be!—the slave could never dare!—the vile Kuzzilbash dog!—But go on, go on—tell me all!'—'My father, there is little more to say, nor dare I enlarge on the subject while you are thus—it is indeed as you suspect,—Shireen has fallen, and Ismael is the wretched cause!'—'Great God! what news is this?—how has this dust fallen upon my head!' exclaimed the Khan after a short pause, for he seemed stunned by the certainty of the evil which till then he had only dreaded.—'But where are they, my son?' continued he, rousing himself—'where is the miscreant? where is the vile polluted girl?—Daughter!—no daughter of mine; nor shall our shame continue for an hour by suffering her to live that time! Where are they confined? let me see them instantly!'

"'Stop, my father!' said Selim, seizing his arm as he trembled with rage—'you have promised to be calm; you must not see them now.'—'Must not! who shall prevent me, hah?—off, weak boy! unhand me! let me go! By Allah! you are worse than they!—A son of mine to tell me of his sister's

shame, with that tranquil face, and then to seek to hold me from her villainous betrayer! Had you come before me with your hands and dagger dyed with their blood, I might have pardoned your anticipating my vengeance; but that you should submit to the affront yourself, and even seek to control *my* wrath!—away! begone! lest you also feel its sharpness!'—and the sword was half drawn in his hand. 'Then be it so!' calmly but firmly said Selim, 'for only over my body shall you approach your wretched daughter, who, already stricken to the earth, will not long survive to excite your fury.'

"The steady but respectful bearing of his son restored the father somewhat to himself. The sword fell back into its scabbard, and stepping back a pace, he raised his hand to his flushed brow, and gazed for some moments as if rallying his scattered thoughts. 'My father,' continued Selim after a pause, 'young as I am, you have honoured me with your confidence, and been pleased to approve of my judgment in matters of no small moment:—think you that the honour of my family is a light thing in my eyes? Have I ever shown myself a coward, that you should think I fear to defend it, or to vindicate its purity by blood if required?—or do you imagine that this honour is to be protected by proclaiming with clamour, and by deeds of violence, the shame that

has fallen upon us, and which hitherto I have carefully concealed?—Recollect yourself—be calm—be a man.'

"'You are right, my son,' said the father, after some moments of reflection;—'we shall be cautious—I will smother the rage which devours me, though I should choke in the struggle:—our revenge shall be secret and silent; but not the less certain, not the less deadly. But where are they, Selim? are they confined securely?—we must not be noisy, but we cannot be too speedy!' and his hand grasped the hilt of his dagger, as if to loosen it for the blow, while he looked eagerly at his son to lead the way. But Selim once more laid his hand upon his father's arm:—'Whom would you slay, my father?—your wretched daughter? Alas! suffering and terror have bowed her to the earth—already almost is she as you would have her be—even now she has but a few hours to live—your dagger is not required—nor, were you to see her sweet, pale face, as it now lies with the seal of Azrael on every featûre, could you endure to hasten his approach.'—The face of the Khan softened for a space, but soon his eye flashed fire again; 'But the miscreant who has brought her to this?' asked he, 'what has become of him? where have you confined him? what tortures are equal to his crime?'—'The wretched Ismael endures worse tortures than your knives or your

whips could inflict,' replied Selim; 'for, however blameable may have been his imprudence, he never dreamt of its lamentable consequences. Would you slay the creature whose life was preserved by yourself? whom you have nourished and loved? whose blood has been lavished in your service, and to whom your own son has been indebted for his life? But you are spared the perpetration of a deed which would blacken your name, and fill your soul hereafter with remorse. Ismael is no longer here.'—'Not here!—what has become of him? where is he? has he fled? why is he not pursued? has the dastard fled from the punishment which he knew would follow his crimes?'

"'Ismael has fled, my father, it is true; but he is no dastard: freely would he have given his life to redeem the misery he has caused, nor would he have quitted the camp, but at my earnest desire, —I might say command.'—The Khan stood for a moment aghast with astonishment. 'Thy command, traitor!' cried he in a voice of thunder—'what devil hath besotted thee to cheat me of my vengeance thus?—but it shall be wreaked upon thy own head!' Again the hand was on the dagger-hilt, and again the calm and noble demeanour of his son brought the Khanto himself. 'Tell me,' cried he, after a pause; 'tell me, hath God stricken thee with madness? or how is it that thou hast conspired to drive me distracted?

Thou aid mine enemy to fly! Thou seek to preserve the destroyer of thy sister! the dishonourer of thy family! By the holy Caabah! it is incredible—it must be a dream: I cannot be awake!'

"'Father,' replied Selim, 'when you left the camp, you deemed me worthy to fill your place; and, however imperfectly I may have done so, I acted as my poor judgment led me to think was best. We all observed the singular attachment which grew up between the boy Ismael and the girl Shireen; nor did a devotion, which might well exist in the heart of a favoured servant for the daughter of his patron, excite any serious suspicions in the minds of the family. Whatever more presumptuous thought might arise at any time in young Ismael's breast, you yourself checked on more than one occasion; nor did I fail to add such hints as might avail towards that end. But the torrent from the mountains may as easily be arrested as the course of youthful affection! Prohibited from open intercourse, Shireen and Ismael met in private, and the consequences you already know. But, however guilty in act, their hearts were free from intended wrong. Oh! never did the deep contrition and despair which bowed these two unfortunate creatures to the ground, form a cloak for heartlessness and vice! Had you, my father, beheld

the poor girl trembling and sinking under the intemperate violence of my mother and old Kawleh, or witnessed the distraction of Ismael, the frank confession of his guilt, and his noble offer of himself to glut the vengeance of the offended family, if that could in any degree atone for his guilt, or benefit the victim of his thoughtlessness, even your heart would have been melted, and you would have done as I did—rescued the dying girl from her tormentors, and risked your life to save the companion of your youth, the friend who had spilled his blood to save yours, from a severe even if it were a merited fate. I pledged my life for the safety of Shireen; I conjured Ismael to fly, and supplied him with the means. And now, father, I am in your hands: if I have done amiss, let the punishment fall upon my head—I will not shrink from it.'

"Thus did my noble and warm-hearted brother exert himself to allay the storm which impended over me, and to pacify his furious father; whose rage, though it abated in open violence, still boiled in his bosom, and left him sullen, moody, and unsatisfied. Long did Selim continue to soothe and argue by turns; for though the Khan could not deny, that to conceal the mischief which had happened, was the best way to protect the honour of his family, he was scarcely able to control his feelings, so as to put this principle in practice:

nor was it without extreme difficulty that he was prevented from visiting me, until his anger had given way to a moody sadness, on which Selim hoped my feeble and exhausted condition might work a favourable effect. But several days elapsed before this was the case; and during all that time he never left his father's side. It was then that by representing the remorse which he must feel, if I should die without his forgiveness, and by painting to him the wretchedness I had suffered already, he prevailed on him to visit me with the intention of speaking pardon and peace to my soul. How well he succeeded in that benevolent intent, you have already heard.

"Thus terminated the immediate consequences of our unfortunate misconduct. When my mind was relieved from the terror of my father's wrath, and when I felt the eye of kindness once more beaming on me, I began to recover; and after some weeks my bodily health was entirely restored.

But there were other ills, of which the remedy was not so simple. The pain I should have felt at the thought that we were never to meet again, was swallowed up for the time in the agony of our stormy parting and its fearful consequences. But as the effect of these wore away, the dismal void which you had left, Ismael, began to be felt, and I had time to brood over my irreparable loss. A woman's heart, which loves as faithfully as mine

did, when once it loses the object of its adoration, sustains a withering blight of which it never can recover. I bore my wretchedness as best I could, in silence; for whom, besides myself, had I to blame? I applied myself to my domestic duties with a zeal which gained me the approbation even of the Khanum, but for which I could claim no merit; for I worked rather to distract my thoughts, than from any sense of duty. All was dark and gloomy to me, and day after day succeeded each other in cheerless, unpitied sorrow. The only one who felt for me was Selim; he knew what was passing in my heart—he comprehended my silent misery and pitied me while approving the efforts which I made to conceal it.

"'You are right, my sister,' would he say—'give idle tongues no cause to talk:—time will heal your wounds, and who can read the future?—God is great!—who can tell what may yet be in store for you?'"

CHAPTER IX.

STORY OF SHIREEN CONTINUED—MISFORTUNE.

"Time wore on for a while in the same unvaried, and to me tedious round; but, before the sun had twice made the circle of the zodiac, events took place, which effectually roused every aoul of the tribe, and gave us variety and excitement enough at the expense of security. Our enemies, the Eersanees, although they entertained a bitter sense of the injuries they had received at our hands, were for some time too deeply embroiled with certain branches of the Salera Toorkomans, and with their distant neighbours, the Oozbecks of Bockhara, to make any serious attempt at reprisals: but about two years after your departure we were alarmed by a report, that they had arranged their difference with Abool Fyze Khan, the ruler of the Oozbecks, agreeing to pay him a certain stipulated military aid, and to leave the whole of his territories unmolested by their plundering

parties; and moreover, having entered into a coalition with their former enemies the Saleras, they were now turning their thoughts toward revenge upon us, who had so often wronged and insulted them.

"The first decided proof of the truth of these reports was the arrival of several fugitives from some distant aouls of our tribe, which had been surprised and destroyed by the Eersanees. The sight of captives brought to camp was familiar enough, and we were all well acquainted with the tattered, haggard and dejected appearance of persons in such a situation; but those who now sought our tents were our brethren, people of the same tribe and name, fleeing from pursuit of our common enemies, and bringing home to us tokens of the misery of war and plunder.

"So formidable and unlooked-for a league on the part of our enemies demanded measures of corresponding vigour and precaution on ours; and the chiefs of the Tekehs, meeting in council, resolved on applying to the Yamroulee and Allee-ailee tribes, who, by position and connexion, were the natural enemies of the Eersanees, and proposing terms for an alliance of an offensive and defensive nature. This was instantly agreed to, and measures were as immediately taken for repressing the destructive plundering parties of the enemy. These

measures were successful in a certain degree; but the security which had for many years been enjoyed by the remoter aouls of the tribe, was fatally broken up.

"This disturbance between two Toorkoman tribes was a signal for universal confusion; for the Oozbecks of Bockhara and Ourgenge, in endeavouring to support the prerogatives of their respective tribes, became themselves embroiled; their dependants on either side took arms of course, and the whole of the Dusht-e-Kipchauk* was thus involved in bloodshed and desolation. No place, however remote its situation, from the banks of the Attruck and the shores of the Koolzum,† to those of Oxus, were safe from the bands of plunderers, which traversed its wide surface in every direction. Even our sweet retreat at the Chushmah Jemallee was threatened; and, as the strength of our aoul was called upon for active service at a distance, our chiefs would not venture to leave the women and valuables in so defenceless a situation; so they resolved to abandon it. I cannot describe to you, Ismael, the anguish I suffered at quitting, in all probability for ever, this beloved spot, the scene of all my infant delights—of all my sweetest and most painful recollections.

* The name given to the wide extent of Desert which stretches eastward and northward from the shores of the Caspian sea.

† The Caspian sea.

"On the day which preceded our removal, I was totally unable to work. My heart was full to bursting, but I could not weep; agitated by a feverish restlessness, I wandered about, and vainly sought relief in gazing at every well-known object, which was soon to be seen by me no more. How powerfully, dear Ismael, did they recall every moment I had spent with you!—every scene we had visited together, every act or word of endearment that had passed between us, came back with powerful force, and the future grew dark, opposed to the brightness of the past, until hope itself seemed to vanish in the gloom. That day the sky was overcast, and the air was sulphureous and heavy. The thunder rolled heavily in the west, and the sun was hid behind huge masses of dark lurid clouds. Towards evening there fell a heavy shower, which refreshed the earth, and gave a delicious coolness to the air. The sun, just before he set, burst through the clouds that surrounded him, lighting up their edges with crimson and gold, and throwing a long line of glittering radiance over the boundless plain. I went for the last time to the height above the fountain, and looked abroad over the wide landscape. The still waters of the little lake lay at my feet, reflecting the blue sky that now shone clear above me; the grass sparkled with the rain-drops, and the pastures beyond were studded with innumerable flocks and

herds, returning for the last time to their pens. All was sweet and tranquil; and the thought that I might see it no more, came so mournfully across my mind, that I was quite overcome,—my heart swelled, and I burst into tears. Oh, what a relief they gave me! how different was the melancholy which I now felt, from the bitter, suffocating pain that oppressed me in the morning! A prayer of thankfulness to the merciful Creator rose spontaneously to my lips, and I returned to the tents for the last time with a lightened heart. It surely was a presage of happiness after the stormy day of misfortune should be past.

"Next morning, before day-break, the whole aoul was in motion towards the east, and in three days were settled for a time in the vicinity of a stronghold not far from Merve, belonging to a branch of the Yamroulees, where the women were considered to be in safety, and the cattle could be subsisted for a season.

"My father and Selim were by no means unemployed during the transactions I have related. Omer Khan being considered one of the most active chiefs of his own branch of the Tekehs, he was called upon both in council and in the field, whenever a case of difficulty came to be decided on, or when an expedition of more than ordinary danger required a bold and experienced leader; and the uncommon prudence and fearless

gallantry of his son could not long remain unnoticed, so that he soon became even a greater favourite than his father.

"This war of the tribes grew more desperate as time rolled on, for every alternate success exasperated the vanquished while it elated the conquerors; and bloody feuds increased in number and in virulence, for the contending parties seldom met in combat but one or other of them had to deplore the loss of some chief or champion, who fell a victim to his own over-ardent courage, or the obstinate pursuit of some implacable opponent.

"For more than twelve months had this desultory but bloody warfare been carried on, and many a widow and orphan had cause to curse its obstinate continuance, when it happened that the chiefs of the united tribes received intelligence, by means of spies who had pushed far into the Desert, that a strong and chosen body of Eersanees and Saleras were on their march to attack a large camp of Yamroulees, settled upon the Moorghaub river to the south-east of Merve. It was resolved to waylay these marauders; and, for this purpose, a party of Tekehs and Yamroulees, all picked men, were selected, and the command of them was given to my father, while another body of only half the number was intrusted to that of his son. The first was ordered to march directly towards

the point of attack, where it was supposed they would fall in with the Salera and Eersanee robbers; the latter was directed to scout in a somewhat different direction, in order to take advantage of any deviation which they might possibly make from the straight course, and, if possible, to harass and keep them in check until the larger party should come to their assistance.

"Although in the course of the war there had been many expeditions undertaken of equal importance and hazard with this, I know not how it happened, but certainly a greater anxiety seemed from the first to prevail regarding its success, than for that of any that had preceded it; perhaps, this sensation was prophetic of the calamities about to assail us, the first of which was to fall upon this devoted band. Many sinister omens, indeed, were afterwards remembered, which ought perhaps to have warned them of their fate, and which at all events should have been noticed by those who professed to tell the evil from the happy hours, and to guide the warrior's path according to the rules of mysterious science. For three nights before the expedition set out, the dogs of the camp howled incessantly, and particularly around my father's dwelling. A favourite horse of his, one which should have been his charger on the march, was found dead at his pickets, without any marks of violence, and without any previous dis-

order. The jackals and wolves came in multitudes into the very heart of the camp; and a heavy flight of vultures were observed sailing away in the direction of the intended expedition. As my father's musician attempted to play a martial air, at a feast which he gave to his officers on the night before they set out, a string broke three times running; nor could he tune the instrument to its usual pitch, so that it sent forth a wailing sound, so remarkable that my father desired him to cease, for he did not want a funeral howl. Nay, it was even whispered that the baneful constellation of Yooldooz* was in the ascendant, though unseen, at the very hour when they mounted their horses to set off.

"Such auguries, had they been remarked, should have warned our friends sufficiently against an enterprize which could not be otherwise than unfortunate;—but fate stops the eyes and the ears of the foredoomed—no doubts were entertained, no fears were felt by our brave young men, and the whole party assembled in high spirits. I shall never forget the gay and gallant appearance which they made when drawn up in order on the plain, but a few hundred yards from our tents: their horses pawed the ground with impatience, and neighed aloud, while the spear points and steel

* A constellation so called, to the baneful influence of which much evil is attributed by the superstitious Persians.

caps glittered in the first beams of the morning sun. My father, bravely equipped in a solid steel-linked coat of mail, and a richly embossed helmet with a bright sharp spike upon the top, and skirts of steel-woven chains hanging down over the neck and shoulders, left his tent before the break of day, and busied himself for a while in examining the condition and preparation of his troops. When he was fully satisfied, he returned to the tents for a moment to take leave of his family; and in spite of the determination which sat upon his features, I thought I could detect a cast of thoughtful gravity, unlike the eager and almost youthful energy which used to characterize his deportment on such occasions. He gazed earnestly on his younger children, and a shade of anxiety flitted over his countenance as he kissed them round, When I approached, he took me in his arms, and turning to Selim, who was also prepared to march, 'Remember, my son!' said he, 'should any thing befall me, I leave you in my place—these children become yours:—be kind in particular to this unfortunate one, the sun of whose life has been darkened: pluck the thorns of sorrow from her feet, and shelter her from the blasts of misfortune;—let her heart rest in peace, if not in happiness, under the shadow of your arm!' I wept as I embraced him, and a foreboding fear came over me;—but the drums and the trumpet

sounded; he hastily caught up his spear, threw his shield over his shoulder, and mounting the horse which was ready to receive him, galloped to the troop, which instantly got into motion.—I never saw him more!

"Standing with others of the women upon the wall of the old fort, near which we were encamped, we watched the troop as they filed from their ground into the order of march. The dark and fluctuating body advanced but slowly at first, under the cautious control of their leaders, who had no small difficulty in restraining the impetuosity of the younger gallants: indeed, these might be seen every now and then darting from the column like arrows from a group of archers, bounding and curveting over the plain, to subdue, as it would seem, the fire of their steeds, but in reality to give vent to their own overflowing spirits. By degrees, however, order was attained; the column lengthened into marching order, and the leaders moving faster forward, carried the whole party briskly into the Desert, where they soon faded into an undefinable mass, then into a dark speck upon the waste, and finally melted entirely from the view. I watched them until my straining eyes, blinded with tears, could no longer distinguish them, and then retired to weep at leisure. Alas, it was the prelude to more bitter grief!

"But five days had elapsed from that of their departure, when the camp was thrown into consternation by the arrival of one or two fugitives, on horses sorely jaded, and gored in long wounds by the sharp stirrup-iron,—who reported the utter destruction of our party, and the death of the Khan their leader. But as these persons bore no great character for courage, and as no confirmation of their report was received for two whole days afterwards, we began to recover from our panic, and to think that the report, if not entirely false, was at least greatly exaggerated. At the end of that time, however, our doubts were fatally removed, and the full extent of our misfortune was forced upon our conviction.

"On the afternoon of the seventh day, the sentinel posted on the top of the old fort perceived a cloud of dust in the distance, which gradually approaching, proved to be occasioned by a body of armed men, who were holding their course slowly towards the camp. Presently single horsemen might be discerned, who, leaving the main body, came on at a more rapid pace:—the alarm which was at first excited, subsided at this unequivocal proof of their being friends, and soon indeed we discovered in them the precursors of the wretched remnant of our troops, who had so lately left us so high in spirits and in hopes.

"No sooner had they reached the camp than a

wail arose from the women. Bloody, wounded, and exhausted, their appearance alone was sufficient to strike us with dread; but we were not long left in suspense. They told us, in a word, that the Khan was killed, along with nearly all his party, and that Selim, who had also suffered severely, had with much difficulty succeeded in carrying off his father's body, and effecting a retreat from the superior numbers by which he had been assailed.

"Amid the cries and lamentations of all the camp, which now poured forth to learn who had been made widows and orphans by this disaster, the survivors arrived. Their welcome was melancholy; shrieks rent the air as each family caught the tidings of a father, a husband, or a son having fallen, or received from his more fortunate companions some relique in proof of his fate. Small time, indeed, had there been to collect such memorials, and still less had the few who escaped from the general fate been able to carry off the bodies of the slain. Such marks of general respect could only be paid to one or two favourite chiefs, whose bodies had been recovered by efforts of the most devoted and persevering courage. Among them was that of my father; and a louder wail arose as Selim, aided by some chosen friends, approached, bearing his honoured remains, rescued from insult at the expense of their blood. A melancholy

band they were, indeed; wounded, tattered, soiled with blood and dust, just as they had made good their retreat from the field of their defeat.

"The Khan had been greatly beloved and respected in the aoul; his arm had been to them an unfailing support, and under the shadow of his prowess the people believed themselves secure: when, therefore, the old men and the women found their foremost friend and champion taken from them, their despair was unspeakable; even private grief gave way for a while to consternation at this public calamity; they bewailed the misfortunes of their tribe, and, shaking their heads, predicted the total destruction of this branch of the Tekehs. Despondency was spreading fast, and one might have thought that the foe was already close to the camp, and that all power of resistance was at an end. Selim, wounded and exhausted as he was, perceived the fatal impression, and made a powerful effort to counteract it: he ordered his father's body to be carried to the tents, while he turned and addressed himself to the surrounding crowd.

"'My friends,' said he, in a clear and steady voice, 'this is not a time for yielding to weak and womanly grief. We have sustained a great loss, it is true; and my own share in it is not the smallest—but reverses of fortune are common to all mankind. We have often been victorious;—

for once we have been worsted: by the blessing of Allah we shall be successful again and again! Who is exempt from misfortunes? The blessed Prophet himself (praised be his name!) was forced to fly from the malice of his enemies; yet, see! his law has penetrated to the uttermost parts of the earth.—Let us not brood over our losses,—let us try to repair them. We have lost many comrades, but we have still many brave soldiers, who are ready to shed their blood in defending their families and properties against their foes. Let us instantly take measures for placing all that is dear to us in security. What is the use of yon fort, but to protect our wives and children?—What Eersanee will venture to approach them in it? If, indeed, we stay here in open plain bewailing our loss, they may pursue us and make it greater; but the wolf at bay is dangerous, and who dare to attack him in his den? Should they be rash enough to approach, we shall give them a reception such as will convince them that the Tekehs are still to be feared. We have lost a great commander,—may Heaven receive him to its mercy!'—his voice faltered, and he paused for a moment;—'What then? we have elders enough for counsel; and for a leader in combat, I, young and inexperienced though I be, am ready to accept the dangerous, perhaps the invidious post, and, aided by the advice of our

oldest warriors, will provide Inch-allah!—for the safety of the aoul. Let us, then, spend no more precious time in grief, my friends, but each to his task: let not darkness find us unprepared; let our tents be struck, let the women and children be placed in the stronghold, and let such of our cattle, as we cannot properly secure, be driven far off beyond the reach of our foes, should they be mad enough to pursue and attack us in our den.'

"An appeal so spirited, to people overwhelmed with grief and consternation, had all the effect he expected. The voice of Selim, like that of a heavenly messenger, arrested the dangerous panic, and roused their paralyzed energies. A bustle of activity immediately commenced: the sun was well nigh setting; but ere his beams had departed, the tents were struck, and, together with the most valuable of our moveables, were safely deposited within the precincts of the fort, where accommodation was hastily and rudely prepared for the women and children. Horses and cattle, men and women, were packed within the old mouldering walls; and a small detachment was sent with the most valuable portion of those animals which could not be so protected, to a distant pasture, where it was believed that an enemy would scarcely dream of following them.

"Even those who had but just arrived after seven sleepless nights, weary and wounded as they were,

laboured in completing these precautions. The different approaches to the place, and the breaches in the walls, were barricadoed with such materials as were to be had; and where this could not be done, the women laboured in digging trenches to impede the approach of horsemen. In some places pits were made, armed with sharp pickets and covered over with reeds and grass, to serve as traps into which an enemy might fall as they rushed on to the assault. About four hours after sunset, the place was rendered capable of a stout defence; and not till then did Selim or his weary companions refresh themselves by a hasty meal, and seek a short repose. The women, stimulated by the danger which threatened them, and inspired with confidence by the gallant bearing of their young chief and his courageous companions, exerted themselves in providing for their comfort; they washed and dressed their wounds, stiff and inflamed with the unceasing toil of many days; and chafed their swelled and weary limbs, exchanging their soiled and tattered garments for more comfortable raiment. Such food, as time and circumstances allowed of, was prepared; and having set a careful watch from among our fresh men, we all retired to rest, every man with his arms at hand, to be ready in case of a surprise.

"It was only after these arrangements had been completed, that Selim was able to attend upon his

widowed mother, and endeavour to speak some words of comfort to her wounded soul. Under the temporary shelter of some black felts, supported by a few spears and wooden poles, was laid the body of Omer Khan; and by it, on the ground, sat the Khanum and the women of the family, myself among the rest. A low wailing murmur, or a deep sob burst from among us at times, as we bent over the dead; but we were too much worn out by toil and anxiety to be clamorous in our grief. On the appearance of Selim, his mother arose, and, throwing her arms around him, burst into a passion of tears. This gave a fresh flow to our sorrow, and the place again resounded with bitter weeping and lamentations. Alas! these sounds were universal throughout the camp.

"But Selim, solicitous to counteract rather than to encourage the enervating effects of grief, after indulging his mother for a few moments, besought her to control her feelings. 'He who now lies there a lifeless corse,' said he, 'would never at a moment like this, when the safety of his tribe was at stake, have suffered a selfish feeling, either of sorrow or of joy, to interfere with his duty. You, mother, should encourage the women of the camp by your example, to show themselves worthy of the name they bear. Heaven knows how soon they may be required to aid in the defence of their families and their honour!—And you, Shireen,

assist my mother to dispose of these remains as best may be, for this night; endeavour after that to recruit your strength by sleep—the coming day may be a trying one.'

"While Selim was yet speaking, the Khanum, whose convulsive burst of grief had already a little subsided, slowly lifted up her eyes, and fixed them on his animated countenance. She controlled her heavy sobs, and her tears gradually ceased to flow,—'Yes, my son, you are right,' said she; 'this is in truth no time for idle grief, nor shall your mother in her last hours give you cause to blush for her memory. I know that my hours are numbered; it is that which consoles and supports my spirits—for I would not, and I shall not survive your noble father:—the struggle which is fast approaching will terminate my life, but your mother will do her duty; you shall see her perish at her post.'

"Selim sought to reason her out of this solemn, mournful mood, but he could not succeed;—she spoke no more, but shook her head, and smiling faintly, rose with her women to make such arrangements as time and the occasion required. As for my brother, such was his anxiety for the safety of those whom Providence had thus placed under his care, that he could scarcely be persuaded to attend to his own wants. He was wounded in several places, but it was with reluctance he per-

mitted us to wash or bind up the gaping cuts; and though he had scarcely tasted food for several days, he now appeared indifferent to what we placed before him. It was while we forced our assistance and attentions upon him, that he gave us a short account of the disaster which had destroyed our friends and their chief.

"The march of the Khan had been prosperous and uninterrupted, until he almost reached the point where he hoped to intercept and surprise the enemy. But his spies had been treacherous, or ill-informed, for he was utterly deceived with regard to the numbers of the enemy. They, it seems, were better served; for while our people were halting to refresh, at some distance from the place of their intended ambuscade, they were suddenly alarmed by the galloping of horse, and before they could well gain their horses, a strong body of Eersanees poured in among them, cutting down and destroying many while yet defenceless. The Khan, after the first surprise was past, rallied a part of his men, and charging a party of the assailants at the head of his best-armed champions, scattered them, and thus gained some moments, which the rest took advantage of to form and join him. Fresh numbers, however, came up, and increased the force of his opponents so greatly, that my father was unable to keep his ground; but he retreated with so good a face, that they

could not prevent him from gaining the summit of a little eminence. There he maintained himself for many hours against twice his numbers, in spite of hunger and burning thirst; for the only springs within reach were in possession of the Eersanees.

"Charge after charge was made upon this position, and each, as it came thundering on, threatened to annihilate the fast diminishing numbers of our friends: but they received their enemies with so determined a countenance, and poured on them such well-aimed flights of arrows while these missiles lasted, that after a serious loss of men, they retired to consult and take breath for a while. Just at this time, a cloud of dust at some distance announced the approach of a reinforcement to one or other party; and it was not long before our men became aware that it was their friends, under command of Selim, who had been watching another body of Eersanees at no great distance. He had learnt the situation of his father from some fugitives who fled in the first confusion, and had hastened with all speed to his assistance, hoping that their combined force might be able to dispose of the Khan's opponents before the troops he had been watching could come up. In truth, the aid he brought could not have been better timed; it raised the drooping spirits of our wearied troops so much, that my father, taking advantage of their enthusiasm, became in turn assailant, and forced

the Eersanees to give ground. But this gleam of good fortune was transient; just as they were indulging in the hope of victory and safety, the troops which Selim had been watching, came hot upon his traces; their friends, encouraged in their turn, returned to the charge, and the Khan and his son were once more forced back to the eminence they had quitted: and there they maintained themselves during the rest of the day.

"Each charge, however, now made havock in our ranks, for arms as well as strength began to fail; and towards the approach of evening, my father, sensible of his critical situation, determined, if possible, to strike some decided blow, that might terrify the enemy and force him to abandon the field. Calling, therefore, around him the few survivors of his most trusty champions, he made an unexpected and furious attack upon a body of their opponents, which was in the confusion of a discomfited charge. The effect was perfectly successful, and he was pursuing his advantage, terrifying the flying wretches with his shouts, and opening a bloody path before him with his sword, when his horse, exhausted by incessant fatigue, stumbled and fell. This unfortunate accident was instantly observed: the Eersanee champions rallied, and, while our men were endeavouring to maintain their advantage, and assist their chief, bore down and overwhelmed the greater part of

them with numbers. My father, entangled with his horse, was trampled on and speared in a moment, along with many of his followers; and this handful of brave devoted men would have been entirely destroyed, had not Selim, who remained on the height, watching with anxiety and alarm the issue of this daring attempt, made a sudden rush with those about him to the spot. His impetuous charge once more drove back the Eersanees, but too late to do more than recover the body of his father. The day was lost to him; and retiring once more to the height, he contented himself with acting on the defensive, against the few faint attacks which the enemy thought fit to attempt. They had suffered even more severely than our people, in proportion to their numbers; and, contented probably with having frustrated our intentions, broken the flower of our tribe, and acquired no small booty from our slain, they drew off at night-fall, and left the field.

"The moment it was ascertained that they had retired in earnest, my brother, who distrusted their apparent moderation, began his retreat towards the camp. It was matter of life or death, and every one urged on his jaded horse until many fell dead with fatigue beneath their riders. Few and short were the halts they made, and at each of them the band was diminished by the number of those who dropped from wounds, from

weariness, or loss of horses. They had scarcely any provisions, nor had their horses any food, except that which they could pick up among the scanty herbage of the Desert. Of near eight hundred men who marched on this disastrous expedition, scarce two hundred returned to camp, and so exhausted were these, that they could not have held out another day:—had they not reached it that night, the greater part must have perished in the Desert.

"Although our party had met with no actual interruption during their retreat, there was yet sufficient reason to fear that the victorious Eersanees would not leave a beaten foe unfollowed; and the more experienced among the band declared that they had observed sure symptoms of pursuit. So fully impressed had Selim been with the probability of such an event, that, on reaching camp, he had exerted himself, as I have already related, to be prepared for the worst. When he had satisfied himself that no more remained to be done, we urged him to take a few hours' repose, and he lay down in his clothes and arms, upon a carpet for that purpose. But slumber will not always be commanded: while the mind is kept wakeful by anxiety, it is in vain for the body, however exhausted or fatigued it may be, to say, 'Come, I will take repose!' Selim tossed and turned upon his couch, unvisited by sleep, or if

weariness united with the deep silence around him to lull his senses into a temporary dose, it was disturbed and unrefreshing, and the quivering motion of his limbs, and frequent starts, betrayed the uneasy activity of his mind."

CHAPTER X.

STORY OF SHIREEN.—THE CAMP ATTACKED.

"Equally anxious as my brother, and still more agitated, I lay sleepless as himself, watching his restless form as it started under the impulse of every coming thought; and when at length, yielding to the painful solicitude which increased as the night wore past, he rose and went into the open air, I rose and followed him. He had reached the top of the wall when I joined him, and was carefully surveying the dim horizon around, listening at the same time with deep attention. 'What! Shireen?' said he, as soon as he saw me by his side, 'wherefore is this, my sister? why have you left your couch so early? was your labour last night insufficient to ensure you a sound sleep?'—'I am concerned to find, my dear Selim,' replied I, 'that the labour and distress of many nights have failed to procure for you that necessary refreshment; but, oh! my brother, consider, I en-

treat you, that you are now our only stay; that both for the sake of your family and the tribe, which looks up to you as their leader, you should guard your life and cherish your health!—think what would become of us were you to be taken from us!'—' It is these very considerations, Shireen, that govern my present conduct. Be satisfied, I will not needlessly expose either life or health. But I am, as you have just now said, the leader of my tribe;—a disaster which we must long deplore has made me so, and I have received this trust at an awful moment. I did not dare admit it to the timorous multitude around me last night, but to you, Shireen, I may confide the truth; we are most critically circumstanced at this moment. We have sustained a terrible defeat: our loss has been great, and it has fallen upon our best and bravest. Unless we shall receive prompt and decided assistance from our allies, I know not how we shall hold out against the force which I am persuaded will soon appear against us. We are pursued, it is not to be doubted: when the Eersanees discovered that we had left our post, they must have followed to harass our retreat. They might have been detained awhile plundering the camp which we endeavoured to defend, but they could never commit so great an oversight as to permit a beaten enemy to retreat unmolested through so vast and unprovided a Desert: the extraordi-

nary rapidity of our retreat may have disconcerted their intentions of overtaking us upon the march ; but, depend upon it, they are upon our traces, and will soon be here. Who is to vigilate over the safety of the camp, if I am negligent? See you not that every one is buried in the profoundest slumber? I cannot even place confidence in the sentinels on the walls;—it is I who must watch, and alarm my weary soldiers if the foe shall approach.'

"'I see it, brother; I see it all: this is no time for repose, nor could I sleep now, if it were. I will watch then with you; and believe me, nothing shall approach my post unchallenged.'—'Well, my dear Shireen, I accept your aid: seat yourself on this broken tower; keep your eye constantly ranging along the dim line of the horizon, and do not neglect the dusky plain more close to us: but your ears may be more useful than your eyes; listen with all your attention, and, on the smallest suspicion of a sound, summon me without delay. On that side the dawn will break, and from that quarter, too, will our foes approach, though they perhaps may choose to make their attack from another point.' With these words he quitted me; and wrapping myself up in a thick, woollen jubbah, I leaned over the mouldering parapet, and kept my eyes constantly wandering over the plain below.

"The night was perfectly calm; the stars shone

in full glory, shedding a hazy light on a few of the nearer objects, but adding to the dimness and uncertainty of every thing beyond. The profound silence around me was only broken by an occasional complaint from one of the pent-up cattle, the kick or the neigh of a horse, or the moans of a wounded man, as the pain of his hurts disturbed his heavy sleep. So intense was the stillness, that imaginary noises sometimes filled the ears; and more than once, I roused myself in alarm at the fancied jingling of bridle-chains, or the faint clash of arms. The light step of Selim, as he made his rounds from point to point, was the only sound which gave relief to my soul: it told me, that amid the ominous silence, there was one human friend near me, and in him alone, after the omnipotent Allah himself, did I put my trust.

"It might have been three hours after midnight, when a strange instinctive sense of alarm crept over my faculties, which were now wound up to an intense degree of acuteness. There was no sound within my ears, nor could I refer the consciousness which I had of some movement in the great plain before me, to the information of any bodily sense. It resembled the intuitive perception we receive of the vicinity of an object when just about to run against it in the dark. I was straining my eyes and ears to detect some sound or motion, when Selim stood beside me. 'Have

you heard nothing, Shireen ?'—' I cannot tell, brother ; but I feel as if danger were at hand.'—' Then you have heard it, too ?'—' What, brother ?'—' I am convinced they are coming ! I am certain that the earth shook with the trampling of many horses ; but I will know the truth before long.' With these words, he made his way over a ruinous part of the wall, and going to a little distance in the plain beyond, I saw him lay himself upon the earth, where he continued motionless for some minutes. 'It is as I thought,' said he, when he returned ; 'I am satisfied now : I heard the trampling of a large body of horse. But if it be as I think, they have halted, and probably will not approach any nearer for these two hours to come. We need not, therefore, rouse our harassed men so soon : they will have enough of it, when it comes. But we must watch their approach with care, and the sentinels must be roused. I will go and see that they keep on the alert.'

"Another hour passed on without alarm ; but about that time my attention was attracted by a long-continued growl from one of our dogs, very different from the sharp bark which they uttered when any thing stirred within the camp. I went immediately to the spot, and found Selim already there. His bent bow was in his hand, and he cautiously concealed his figure behind a mass of ruins, while he searched the deep obscurity below

with prying eyes. A signal of his hand kept me silent, and I watched his motions with deep interest.

"Following the direction of his eyes, and using similar precautions with him to hide myself from view, I saw that he was carefully watching a heap of ruins which had tumbled from an old bastion, and which were overgrown with herbage. Part of this was dry and sere, so that the lizards even which crawled among it, could not stir without a noise. A low rustling was now and then to be perceived among the weeds, and I thought I could distinguish the long hoary stalks of some tall grass slightly shaken. It might have been the effect of some slight current in the air, though there was not a breath of wind stirring; but another howl from the dog called off my attention for the moment, and when I looked again every thing was still.

"Selim now fitted an arrow to his bow, and several others lay ready for use in the hollow of his hand. Ignorant of what he was about, and yet afraid to inquire, I held my breath from anxiety, and gazed at him with indefinable alarm. In a few minutes the rustling was again faintly heard, and I once more saw the grass begin to move; but scarcely was I sensible of this, when Selim, with the speed of thought, discharged an arrow at the place. An ill-suppressed groan succeeded the blow, and the weeds were still more distinctly agitated; while Selim discharged three or four other

arrows at the spot, and then drawing his sword, leaped over the wall at the hazard of his limbs, and rushed towards it. 'Amaun, amaun* !' cried a faint voice; and I could see him lift in his arms the body of a man, which he carried to the foot of the wall, where I stood. 'The game is struck,' said he; 'call the next sentry, and let us get this Desert fox into the fort: he must be examined without loss of time.'

"The wounded man was borne with some difficulty within the walls; no less than three of Selim's arrows had found their way into his body, and one which struck him in the back, had broken short in the wound as he rolled in agony on the ground.—'Who are you, man?' asked Selim, 'and for what purpose have you come like a jackall, to prowl in darkness round our camp?'—'Water! water! or I faint,' cried the miserable wretch; 'give me water, and I will tell you all!'—Water was soon procured, his face and temples were bathed with it, and after a deep draught he seemed to revive. The questions were repeated—'What would you have?' cried he, still writhing with pain—'I am a spy from the Eersanee host who are about to attack you—your fort will soon be roughly wakened. I was sent to discover—if I might—your force, and to report what watch you kept—you have watched too well for me! Now lay

* "Mercy! mercy!"

me down, that I may die in peace.'—'What is their force?' enquired Selim earnestly; 'how mean they to attack us?'—'What you know, you know,' sullenly replied the dying wretch: 'I told you it because it cannot profit you: but think you I am going to betray my countrymen with death staring me in the face? There are enough to tread you under foot; and may it please the almighty Allah, that they may make foot-balls of your heads, and cover their drums with your skins, accursed dogs! and so revenge my death.'—'Miscreant! tell me the truth, or tortures shall wring it from you!'—'Tortures!' returned the wretch with a ghastly laugh, 'and what is it I feel now? But you are too late; you should not have struck so true: before yon red star sinks to the plain, I shall be in Paradise; disturb not my dying moments!'—'It matters not,' said Selim to me; 'lay him down and let him die: we must prepare to give his friends a warm reception.'

"He rose and left me beside the dying man, who now uttered only faint groans. Turning his failing eyes upon me after a while, 'You are a woman,' said he, 'and should be merciful; I beseech you give me some more water, and draw the broken arrow from my back that I may die,—so may Allah help you in your hour of pain!' The appeal was not in vain: touched with his sufferings I turned him gently on his side, held

the water to his mouth, and once more bathed his temples; but my fortitude almost failed me as I sought for the bloody shaft, and drew it with an effort from the wound. The blood gushed forth in a torrent, but the pain instantly ceased;—'Thanks, kind creature!' he faintly exclaimed, as he once more fell upon his back; 'may God protect thee! My gratitude is due for this good office: —avoid the northern side of the fort, the assault will be hottest there—the bastion there is'—He could not finish, a hoarse rattle in his throat announced the last agony; and shuddering at the sight, I quitted the body and sought for Selim.

"I found him rousing the chiefs and the trustiest of his friends, to prepare for the fierce approaching contest. There were not five hundred men within the place, though it contained more than double that number of women and children. But you, Ismael, can tell that a Tekeh woman can draw a bow, or wield a spear upon emergency, almost as effectually as her husband. In a short time all were awake; men and women were informed of the danger which threatened them, and told that their only chance of safety lay in fighting with heart and hand to the last drop of their blood. The more experienced and trusty warriors were stationed at the weakest points, with such a force as could be spared; spears and bows were placed in the hands of the most courageous women, in order

to support their husbands or their sons in case of need; and every one was enjoined to remain in perfect silence and concealment, at their stations behind the walls or ruins, until the signal to show themselves should be given.

"By the time these arrangements were completed, the false dawn had appeared; and we listened with painful impatience for the sounds which were to summon us to action. Oh! what an interval was that to many, who, like myself, were but little inured to scenes of blood and strife! Seldom had the din of war reached us at the retired and beautiful Chushmah Jemallee; and even since our removal to this new place, we had rather been alarmed by the distant thunder of the tempest, than had suffered from the visitings of the storm itself; but now it was howling around our very camp, and murder and rapine, with all the horrors of actual war, within a single hour were to burst among us, and make us their victims. If the camp that day had possessed no better defenders than myself and many others of my sex—had all trembled as we did—the affair would have been speedily terminated; but it pleased the Omnipotent Disposer of events to order it otherwise.

"The darkness which often succeeds the false dawn of morning in the Desert, had fallen with deeper gloom upon the plain, when a low rushing sound, like that of a breeze among the reeds,

caught the quick and practised ears of the elder warriors. 'The enemy comes on!' said Selim to the officers around him; 'listen to my directions before every one hastens to his post; and remember, that the fortune of this day—yea, the fate of your families and your own lives—depends upon exact obedience. Let every one conceal himself with care; let not a sound be heard: we must make the enemy believe us unprepared—unconscious of his being near us—off our guard—asleep. Let no one stir until they hear my voice; then up and upon them in the name of Allah. Let clouds of arrows drift in their faces; but let not one be shot without an aim. The spearmen also will have objects to strike at with effect by the time they hear my voice, and then, Bismillah! let them strike home. But let no man leave the walls:—let them feel the strength they contain, but let not that strength be wasted in streams that may flow from them, but may never return. You comprehend me all, my friends?—are my directions understood?'—'Yes! yes! you have said well—Aufereen! aufereen!* His father could not have spoken better!' cried all the chiefs;—and each and all repaired to their posts.

"The sullen sound of the approaching host had now become more audible; while every noise within our camp was hushed to perfect stillness.

* "Admirable! admirable!"

The very horses, which stood ready saddled at their pickets, seemed to catch the spirit of their chief; not a neigh or a foot-tramp was heard. The dogs, crouched beside their owners, were kept with difficulty from uttering the sounds which their instinct prompted, as they snuffed the coming foe; although an uneasy whine, or a stifled growl, would sometimes escape to tell of their alarm. The lowings of the cattle alone were heard, as they rose from time to time upon the silence of the morning, as if to tell our enemies that the camp was still undeserted.

"As the trampling of the host approached, the eyes of all the leaders were strained to detect the dimensions of their column, and their ears to judge of its numbers by the sound. They whispered together, but I could not hear what they said.—'Hush!' cried Selim, near whom I had instinctively crept, 'either they halt, or are about to change their course: the sound is no longer uniform and deep; be attentive all! they have separated—I am certain of it.'

"The chiefs and elders were soon convinced that their leader was in the right. The approaching body had certainly divided, for the sound now came from two distinct quarters; swelling on the ear in the one, and becoming fainter in the other. At this moment I remembered the words of the dying spy, and mentioned them to Selim. 'Hah!

my sister!' returned he, 'this may be of importance; in God's name I will attend to it!—and the hint has just come in time, for I doubt not the detachment which has just left them is destined to take us on the weak side; but we are stronger there than yet they know of.'

"A dull grey light now showed itself in the east, and objects upon the plain began to be visible. A dark moving mass was presently to be distinguished; and the glimmer of arms, which broke obscurely from it, would have declared it to be our approaching foes, even had the increasing sound failed to betray them. They halted for a few moments when half a mile distant from the camp, and, separating into three divisions, they approached in perfect silence. Nothing but the tread of horses was heard from their ranks: death itself was not more silent than we were. They halted once more when not two hundred yards from the walls, perhaps surprised at, or suspicious of the total silence within. About half their number then dismounted, and prepared to enter the fort by the many breaches which time had made. Just as they set foot upon the mouldering fragments which lay heaped beneath the wall, in some places to half its height, a loud yell burst from among them; but the voice of Selim was heard above them all, 'In the name of God arise, my friends! Scatter the miscreants! Victory for the

Tekehs! Revenge Omer Khan!'—' Allah-hu-akber! Tekeh! Tekeh!' echoed every man within the walls, as they rose from their ambush: the dogs let loose, flew with hideous yells on the assailants, and hundreds of arrows were showered on them with deadly aim.

"Confounded at this unexpected reception, which turned their own device against themselves, all of the assailants who were in a condition to retreat, drew off with precipitation to a little distance, leaving the slope beneath the walls thickly strewed with dead and wounded men. So steadily had the ambush been preserved, and so close had the enemy been permitted to approach, that many fell by spear-thrusts from behind the parapet; and the arrows told with such fatal force, that they pierced through mail and quilted coat, up to the very feather on the shaft. But our foes were yet too confident from their late success, to suffer so easy a repulse. They knew not probably how serious had been their loss in this first assault. But now they went more cautiously to work; and half their number advanced to renew the storm, while the rest stood ready to assail the defenders of the camp with their arrows. They did so, however, at disadvantage, for our people, protected by the parapet and breast-works, were too little exposed to suffer materially; while, on the other hand, almost every shaft from the walls told

on our assailants, and the few who succeeded in reaching the foot of the wall, were speared the moment they attempted to ascend it.

"Still, however, they persevered, with an obstinacy of courage which called forth our admiration; and we yielded them this more readily, because our own spirits were now so much elevated, that we anticipated their total discomfiture, and our own consequent deliverance and repose. But our cries of triumph were silenced once more by a fresh alarm. The party which had separated from the enemy before their approach to the fort, after taking a considerable circuit, had now made their appearance on the northern side; and believing this manœuvre to have been unforeseen, they attacked with loud shouts, nothing doubting of success.

"Their exultation was premature:—it was to defend this weak point that the pitfalls had been dug the night before; and the hint of the dying spy had induced Selim to station some chosen men behind them, while he himself kept a jealous eye upon every thing that passed in that quarter. The advance of this fresh body had therefore not been made unperceived, in spite of the din and the uproar. The post was strongly reinforced, and my brother hurried in person to repel the first assault.

"But the force of the onset was broke by more

passive engines. Tempted by the easier slope, the horsemen thought to put an end to the business at once, by galloping over every thing into the body of the place, or at least by pushing their horses up to the very foot of the mouldering wall. But as they thundered along, the deceitful surface gave way, and men and horses floundered into the pits and staked themselves in numbers on the spikes at the bottom. The bowmen, taking advantage of their confusion, poured a destructive flight of arrows on the dense mass; and to complete the havock, twenty picked men rushed down from the walls, and speared without mercy all they could reach. At length, those of the enemy who found means to extricate themselves from the medley, retreated beyond arrow-flight and joined their comrades, while our twenty men returned unhurt within the walls.

"Daylight had now fairly broke; the first beams of the sun shot level across the plain, and gilded the eastern front of our camp, which was covered with the dying and the wounded. Many of our own friends were mingled among these, for we had not escaped unharmed. But the loss sustained by our assailants was so great, that though their numbers were still formidable, their courage evidently wavered, and they stood for a while irresolute. Nevertheless, furious, and doubtless ashamed at being forced to abandon their

enterprise, they made another attempt. Forming themselves into one deep compact column, they advanced as if resolved to force success by means of physical strength opposed against a single point; but while the foremost of their troops were engaging our attention, the main body filed off at full gallop in the rear, and dividing into several parties, dashed forward to the points which they believed to be the weakest or worst defended. The manœuvre was skilfully executed, but it was full as skilfully opposed, and the enemy were everywhere met with so much steadiness and effect, that they quickly recoiled again, with great additional loss. It was not without anxiety that we saw them once again draw off, out of bow-shot, into the plain, and form into a compact body: for though our spirits were elevated by successful resistance, we could not contrast the still formidable and threatening mass before us, with the weak and weary troops that manned our walls, without some uneasy sensations; and I think there was not one amongst us who did not feel relieved when our foes, after a few minutes' consultation, were seen sullenly turning round their horses' heads and shaping their course to the northward, carrying along with them such of their wounded men as were able to crawl towards them. Even then we could not feel secure: we still feared that this retreat might prove a feint, that they would return once more, and in short,

that our struggles and our dangers were not yet at an end. By degrees, however, we were relieved by observing their movements; for stretching right forward into the Desert, they held on their course without halting or turning, until distance concealed them from our view, and the cloud of dust they raised, alone indicated their track:—it reminded me of the luckless departure of my father and his brave band, and, though I could not but rejoice at our providential deliverance from our foes, my grief for the heavy misfortunes of our family was bitterly revived.

"Our success was dearly bought—many of our bravest friends had fallen, and even our women had suffered in no small degree—for they had not flinched from their duty, and many were found dead at their posts, when the retreat of our enemies gave us leisure to look around. Among these victims was the Khanum herself, who was found mortally wounded on the northern wall, where the assault had been fiercest. She had been singularly active throughout the whole affair, encouraging both men and women in their duty. Although wounded slightly more than once, she would not listen to the persuasions of her attendants, who would have had her retire; 'No! no!' said she, 'it is not time yet! my work is not over!' And when the yells of the enemy were heard on the northern face of the fort, she flew with the rest to

that point, cheering the defenders with her voice, while her arrows flew sharply and true among the assailants. We found her faint and gasping for breath on the very edge of the broken wall, where she had been fully exposed to the whole drift of arrows, that swept the place like a hail-shower. A faint smile lighted up her features as we approached,—'This is as it should be,' said she feebly; 'I knew—I wished it to be thus. And are these Eersanees gone?—are they fled? beat off?—that is also well;—it is pleasant to die victorious!—Selim, take my blessing,—I go to your father! It is your business to revenge his death!—you have begun it well.—Bury me with him, my son!—Shireen, you have been a kind and dutiful child to me—farewell! and bless you also. I fear! I fear! this is but the beginning of woe and misery—but God's will be done!'—These words were spoken painfully and at intervals, and they were her last. Her half-closed eyes gradually lost their fire, a slight convulsion distorted her features for a moment, but it soon passed away, and the spirit took its flight to the realms of Paradise!

"The events of this night confirmed, beyond all question or dispute, the title of my brother to the chief command in the camp. The acuteness, decision, and soundness of judgment he had displayed; his unwearied watchfulness, and indefatigable activity, as well as his conspicuous gallantry and per-

sonal prowess, had endeared him so much to the tribe, that all the elders, as well as the surviving chiefs and warriors, with one voice declared that to him they owed their safety, and he alone was worthy to continue their protector and their leader. Alas! it was a difficult and dangerous post—he lent his aid to prop a falling fabric; for the strength of the tribe was completely broken by these calamities, and from that time forward he had to support a constant struggle for quiet, or rather for existence, which at length terminated in utter ruin."

CHAPTER XI.

STORY OF SHIREEN CONCLUDED.

"The exposed border station which we had hitherto occupied, was now become too dangerous for our reduced strength: and we found it expedient to retreat farther from the reach of our foes, to a position near the protection of our new allies, the Yamroulees. I have observed that our life had become a struggle for existence; and it was one of the most painful kind, for with our power and influence we found our independence also gone. A tract of country near the districts occupied by the tribes of Diroom and Nissa was appointed for us to range over, and there was in it a station on which we could establish a stronghold; but nevertheless, we found ourselves obliged to suffer many indignities and exactions of one sort or other from our kind allies, who, seeing us reduced, and, as they conceived, in their power, did

not hesitate to turn us to their own uses, and make us feel the value of their protection.

"It is unnecessary to relate the succession of misfortunes by which our unfortunate people was bowed to the dust; nor need I dwell upon the unwearied, though too often fruitless struggles by which my brother continued to uphold the credit and influence of his tribe. As if a withering spell had been laid upon us, every effort failed, every scheme, however judicious, was frustrated; and though his own name became exalted as a warrior of the highest class, his influence as a chief, diminished every day with the decreasing number of his followers.

Still earnestly pursuing his one favourite object, of restoring the lost importance of his tribe, he watched with great solicitude the intrigues of the border chiefs of Khorasan, whose restless ambition was constantly involving them in disputes with strangers, or with one another. It seldom happened that the Toorkoman tribes could keep aloof from these disputes, for it was the policy of the contending parties to enlist these tribes as allies on their respective parts, while the numberless hereditary feuds among them encouraged such coalitions, and had no small influence in the distribution of the opposing parties.

"The chiefs of Diroom and Nissa, uniting with

some of the discontented Sheikanloo Koords, resolved, some short time ago, to make a vigorous effort to get rid of the restraint in which they were held by the officers of Nader Koolee Beg, who, as you know, had reduced them and all the other chiefs of the North to acknowledge his authority. These chiefs held forth most tempting offers to all the divisions of the Yamroulee, Tekeh, and Yamoot tribes, who range between Merve and the Attock; and they readily agreed to join the coalition. My brother, conceiving very sanguine hopes of success from the power and respectability of the allied chiefs, accepted with eagerness of a command, which, as it required a more than ordinary share of sagacity and enterprize, they all agreed could not be placed in fitter hands than his. In order to strike the blow they meditated with certainty and effect, it was necessary that the troops of Nader should be watched, and the numerous passes of the hills guarded, to prevent surprise: it was this service which Selim, with a considerable body of young and active warriors, undertook to perform, and there is no doubt, if the coalition had been ultimately successful, that the manner in which he executed this duty would have gained for him a degree of credit and influence most important to his future prospects. That they did not succeed, was no fault of my brother's; so well did he select his spies, and so active were

his emissaries, that not a movement of the enemy could pass unnoticed: even their intentions were anticipated; and though villages and forts were destroyed on the very skirts of the hills, the destroyers themselves were never surprised or discovered. Frequently, when service of a dangerous and delicate description was to be performed, he would confide in no one, but acted as spy himself, and many a narrow escape has he had from the vigilance of his enemies; nor can I even now think without shuddering at the risks he encountered.

"But Heaven had not willed that our party should triumph. Jealousy broke out in the councils of our chiefs, and paralysed the vigour of their measures. The gold and promises of Nader's officers had armed our enemies against us, and our camps were attacked from the Desert, while those who should have defended them were carrying fire and sword into the villages of the Kuzzilbashes. Many of our people left all other duty to defend their homes, and the passes were thus left unguarded, so that the troops of Nader, under command of his brother Ibrahim, descended unopposed to the plains, and attacked the forces of the principal combined chiefs, which were encamped near Diroom. The doubt and distrust which had arisen among the chiefs, spread its baneful influence among their followers: no man felt

confidence in his neighbour, nor cared to expose his life where he could not be assured of support or co-operation. From such a state of things, no favourable result could be anticipated; the battle soon became a rout, many of the combined troops were slain, many were made prisoners, and the army was totally dispersed. This disaster put an end to the coalition. Each chief made the best terms he could for himself; and the tribes returned to their deserts. But they did not retire unmolested; for, resolved to make an example which should strike them with terror, and prevent such incursions in future, the officers of Nader sent their soldiers to extirpate every tribe, and destroy every strong-hold, which had taken arms against their commander. This order was executed, as far as could be done, with savage punctuality, and many a camp was destroyed, and many a family hunted individually to death:—as for us, we fell an earlier and an easier prey.

"Our camp and little fort had been quite drained of men, for every one capable of bearing arms had followed Selim on his dangerous service, so that none but old white-bearded men, remained with the women and children, to look after the flocks and herds of the aoul. We entertained no dread of danger, for we knew that our friends stood between us and the only quarter from which we had reason to apprehend an attack. This

dangerous security perhaps rendered us neglectful of ordinary precautions; a very indifferent watch was maintained; but, in fact, we were so helpless and unprotected, that though such measures might have warned us of coming danger, it could not have preserved us from its effects.

"One morning, before the dawn of day, we were roused from sleep by a howl from all the dogs of the camp, succeeded by a fearful barking; and before we could well start from our beds to learn the cause of the uproar, it was sufficiently explained by the thundering sound of many horses, which was drowned in its turn by the appalling yell of their riders, as they burst into the camp, and, clearing every obstacle, penetrated in a moment into the middle of our small fortification.

"Oh, Ismael! how can I describe to you the horrors of that morning! The sweet sleep of perfect security was broken by the terrible shouts of our murderers, and we opened our eyes only to see the cold gleam of their swords, or received them in our bodies as we started to our feet. Many, unconscious of their danger, met their death-blow before they recovered from the dizzy confusion of sleep: others made vain efforts to escape, but were pursued and disabled in a moment by the pitiless assassins. The aged of either sex were butchered without enquiry; but when they saw that no resistance was offered, that there were

none, in truth, able to resist, they ceased to slaughter, and commenced plundering. Such of the survivors as were considered worth the trouble, were bound as prisoners, and before the sun was an hour high, our camp was a mass of smoking ruins, and its few remaining inhabitants were driven, together with their cattle, in one herd, before the plunderers.

"Of our family, scarcely one escaped this finishing blow; all who were advanced in years here lost the lives they had preserved through so many changes, nor were the young much more fortunate: my two brothers, fine promising youths, had left the camp with Selim; the remaining children of the Khan were never seen after this fatal morning. Your little Sitarah, and the nurse who still attends me, were all that were to be found remaining of our once numerous and powerful house. Ah, Ismael, what a heart-breaking change was this from the time when you knew us prosperous and happy at the sweet, the beloved Chushmah Jemallee!

"But the cup was not yet full. In spite of our consternation and despair, we remarked, that instead of being led toward the Desert, our captors took a direction southward, towards the skirts of the hills. Towards noon they were joined by another party, who appeared to have returned from a similar and equally successful expedition. The

children and women were now disposed of on camels, and placed in the rear, while the armed men kept in compact order in front. In the evening a cloud of dust was observed ahead of our line of march, and a very little time was sufficient to show that it proceeded from a troop of horsemen, greatly inferior in numbers to our captors, but we prisoners could form no judgment of who or what they were. No sooner, however, had the two parties approached each other, than the shouts and the tumult of battle announced that they were enemies—friends, no doubt, to us: and oh! how fervently I prayed that Allah might give strength to their arms, and make their swords keen and resistless. But it was otherwise decreed; after a long and terrible struggle, the din and the clamour ceased, and we saw a party of our captors approach, leading and driving along with shouts of exultation another group of prisoners. My heart misgave me as I witnessed this fatal extinction of my last hope; but oh! the sickening pang that overwhelmed me, when, among the foremost of the prisoners, in spite of the blood and dust with which he was covered, I recognized my brother Selim!

"A piercing shriek escaped me at the sight. 'Selim! my brother! can this be real?' cried I, involuntarily struggling to stretch out my tightly bound arms towards him;—'then the worst is over,

and we have only now to die!' He started at my voice, and made a desperate struggle to approach me, but, weak from loss of blood, he fell back into the arms of those who held him.—'I knew it! I was sure of it!' cried he: 'Shireen! Shireen! now indeed I feel I am a captive!—If ye have any hearts, let me be near her,—that can do you no harm—no fear of my seeking to escape when she is here—if ye are men, for the sake of those ye love most, do not separate me from my sister!'

"Whether the men were touched at our distress, or that the arrangement which took place was the result of accident, I know not, but it did so happen that in disposing of the prisoners Selim was placed near me, and our guards did not object to our marching side-by-side. It was plain, from the precautions made use of, that they considered him as a prize of no small importance, and were resolved to leave him no chance of escaping; yet no unnecessary cruelty or roughness was used; his wounds were bound up, he was accommodated with a horse, and though his arms were tied, and he was securely strapped to the saddle, yet his bonds were not drawn so tight as to give him pain. We had thus the sad comfort of conversing together, and mutually recounting the particulars of our misfortunes.

"It appeared that Selim, alarmed at the pre-

vailing reports of disturbances in the Desert, and losing all hopes of succeeding in an enterprize which was already sacrificed to the jealousies of its leaders, began to feel that it was time to think of his own affairs, and provide for the safety of his family and camp. He informed these leaders of his intention, and took the road homeward with his followers:—Alas! it was already too late—he came but to add to slaughter and misery!

"While still half a day's journey distant from the camp, a single horseman was observed advancing towards them at an unusual speed; and they soon recognized him for one of those who had been left at the camp to watch their herds and flocks. On the night of its destruction, he had been looking after some brood-mares in a meadow at some distance, when he heard the marauders approach. Instantly comprehending the danger, he mounted the first of the animals he could catch, and galloped off to alarm the camp. But, finding it was already too late, he turned, and used all the speed he could, to reach the border, in hopes of encountering some party of the friendly Toorkomans, who might overtake the plunderers and release their prisoners. It was while pressing forward with this intent, that he encountered my brother and his party on their return to camp.

"Horror-struck at these dreadful tidings, poor Selim and his followers urged on their already wearied horses, resolved to know the worst, and to pursue the plunderers, and rescue their surviving friends at every hazard. It was while thus pressing forward, and breathing vows of deep revenge against the authors of this outrage, that they encountered them returning with their spoil:—the train of captives and animals loaded with booty, declared sufficiently from whence they came, and, burning to punish so atrocious an aggression, as well as to release their wives and children, our friends disregarded the superior numbers of their enemies, and instantly spurred their horses to the charge.

"The contest was long and bloody; but the disparity of force was overwhelming on the side of their enemies, and the wearied men and jaded horses of our friends could not withstand the force of their powerful and well-appointed antagonists; one after another, they were borne to the ground and destroyed, until at last the few that remained, hemmed in and surrounded on all sides, were forced to submit to the conquerors,—most of them were sorely wounded. Of my brothers—those young and ardent boys whom I have mentioned, one was killed by the side of Selim in spite of his efforts to defend him, and though no

one could tell what became of the other, he too must no doubt have perished.

"How Selim himself escaped with life it is difficult to comprehend. More exposed than any of his men, he sought to destroy his opponents, and guard the lives of others, rather than protect his own; yet the spears and the swords that strewed them around him, failed to light upon his head: he was wounded in many places, but not so as to endanger his life.

"Such was the account he gave me as we painfully pursued our way. 'And now, Shireen, I must believe that my career is about to close. It is plain they are carrying us to some of Nader's commanders, who doubtless has orders to put us to death as rebels. And for myself I care not how soon they bare the scymetar which shall dismiss my soul to Paradise. I have seen the ruin of my family, the destruction of my tribe,—why should I linger on, and rot piecemeal, a miserable dependent on strangers, unable to recover the honours of our name, or to protect those whom Heaven had placed under my care? It is time that Selim should depart, when the hand of destiny is laid so heavily on him, that it seems as if he lives under a spell, which brings ruin on all that cling to him:—even you, my sister, will fare better when I am gone.'

"'Oh, Selim!' cried I, when the choking sobs

that rose in my breast would give me utterance, 'how can you, at such a moment as this, add bitterness to the despair with which your sister is overwhelmed? whom has she to lean upon but you in the world?—what would the world be to her if you were taken from her?—Oh, no!—I never could, and never would survive you; and if indeed—if it should happen as you say, most willingly shall I lay down my head upon the pillow of death, for all the joy of life would then be departed!'

"'And what has life now for me, Shireen? what object is there left, except indeed yourself, to knit me to earth?—You, who have known me from boyhood until now, can tell how entirely, how zealously I have ever devoted myself to the glory and the welfare of our tribe, and of my father's house. To increase the honour and prosperity of his family, and to preserve unsullied the lustre of his name, if not to add to its brightness by my own deeds, has been the object of my dreams by night, and of my thoughts, as well as actions, by day. All has been in vain! the blight of misfortune has withered my hopes, and the shadow of my arm, instead of yielding protection and blessings, has spread darkness and ruin on those who sought shelter beneath it. It is enough, Shireen!—it is enough. The sun of Selim's destiny has set: the winter of his days is already come, and the grave

opens to receive its victim. My bones will not rest in the Desert with those of my fathers; but my spirit will taste the joys of Paradise with them; nor will the dark-eyed maids frown upon a warrior whose face has ever been towards the foe, and whose sword was always forward to defend the true faith. For your fate, my sister, I still must grieve; and were I once more a free man, perhaps for your sake I might still be content to live. My soul is galled to think that you will remain in the power of some haughty Kuzzilbash; but the will of Heaven be done! Allah-hu-Akber! God is great!'—In this way did Selim give vent to the bitterness that filled his soul:—for my part, my heart was full, and I could only answer by sobs and tears.

"Our guards continued the march till night-fall, and I never can forget the horrors of that halting-place. Food or drink was a luxury that fell to the lot of few, and the groans and ravings of the wounded, calling piteously for water to quench their burning thirst, yet rings in my ears; many of them terminated their sufferings and their lives on the spot where they lay down, and their guards perhaps were not sorry to be relieved of so troublesome and profitless a charge. Their conduct to Selim and myself was, however, widely different; our accommodation—I had almost said our comfort—was attended to in a remarkable manner; my

brother's wounds were dressed as well as circumstances would permit, and a decent portion of food was provided for us. My inexperience led me to augur a better fate and happier issue to our adventures from all this attention, than Selim had anticipated. But his mournful smile checked my hopes. 'You little know them, Shireen,' said he: 'the care they bestow upon us only marks the value which they set upon our lives, and that value consists in the reward which they expect to receive from my enemies for my head: let us not shut our eyes to the signs of destiny; what is written is written!—we are all in the hands of God!'

Our journey to Mushed was long and painful. When we reached the first Kuzzilbash camp, our conductors gave up their prisoners to the commander, an officer of Nader Koolee; whose joy when he learned the name and quality of my brother, sufficiently declared the value of his prize. No time was lost in sending us forward to the capital under a strong escort; but the comparative consideration with which we had hitherto experienced, was now exchanged for the insolent rudeness and neglect, which generally falls to the lot of prisoners. A horse was provided for Selim, it is true, because he was obviously unable to walk, but his arms were tightly pinioned, and all attention to his hurts was at an end. My comfort was

so far consulted, that they furnished a camel with kajawahs which carried Sitarah and myself; and thus shut up I was prevented from witnessing the sufferings of my less fortunate brother, who, when we met at the evening's halting-place, was unwilling to distress me by dwelling on the harsh treatment and pain he had endured during the march. As for me, the agitation and wretchedness of mind I had endured, added to the fatigues and bodily sufferings of this terrible journey, were more than my health could stand; and before we reached Mushed, the delirium of a burning fever had rendered me insensible to all around me. I have since understood, that when our arrival was reported to the governor, Selim with certain others of the prisoners were ordered into the most rigorous confinement until the pleasure of Nader regarding them should be known. With the females it was not thought necessary to deal so harshly, and huts were therefore provided for their temporary accommodation in the quarter near the Oozbeck caravanserai, where the Toorkomans who were appointed to take charge of them had their residence. These arrangements were made during the time I remained insensible; and it pleased the beneficent disposer of events to move with compassion the wife of one of our escort, who, pitying my helpless condition, had me conveyed to her cabin, and took the care of me upon herself.

It is to her humane attention I owe my life; for when the fever, no longer kept up by the constant irritation of travelling, had run its course, and left me,—when I became restored to consciousness, but was sinking fast into the grave with weakness, it was her kind, unwearied attention that revived and preserved the spark of life. But she was poor, and could not afford the comforts and expensive remedies which were necessary to restore my exhausted frame; and worse than all, the recollection of the horrid scenes I had witnessed, and the dreadful doom which hung over my unfortunate brother, like a canker in my heart, consumed the springs of existence, and baffled all her well-meant exertions. It is to you, my dearest Ismael, that my restoration to life and hope is truly due. Had not Providence brought you to my aid, the grave would soon have closed over one who had lost all that made life pleasant. But it is not so now; your undiminished affection has revived my love for life, and fain would I spend what remains of it with you!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE GOOD FIGHT.

SHIREEN was now fast recovering her former strength and beauty. The contrast between the uncertainty and alarm of her late life, and the peace and serenity of her present existence, had a powerful effect on the health both of her body and her mind. She felt that the storm of misfortune, which had destroyed her family piecemeal, and left her a wretched unprotected orphan, had blown over, and she found herself at last secure from insult or want, under the protection of the only man she had ever loved, but whom she never hoped to meet again. I took delight in watching the progress of this salutary change, and rejoiced to see that neither time nor misfortune had robbed her of her charms.

One only cloud threatened our happiness. The life of Selim was still in jeopardy, and the more anxiously I examined the chances in his favour,

the more convinced I became that his peril was extreme. I could not entirely deny my apprehensions to Shireen, but carefully concealed from her their extent. In truth, I hardly dared to trust myself with reasoning upon the subject. I knew that he was safe until the General should arrive, and resolved, when that should happen, to exhaust my credit, and peril my own life, if it were needed, to save his. I could do no more, so I sought to quiet my own apprehensions while soothing those of Shireen.

Nader at length arrived; I was on duty in the Istackball* which went forth to meet him, and lost not a moment in presenting myself at the Durkhaneh when he entered the palace. But he was surrounded by so many officers and khans that I could not approach his person. He acknowledged my obeisance with a look and some words of favour, but the pressure of business was too great to allow me to indulge the hope of a private audience, so I returned to Shireen thoughtful and dispirited.

That evening the gholaums and officers of his Highness's guard received orders to hold themselves in readiness, as their attendance would be required by sunrise the following morning at the

* The procession deputed to meet and receive a great man on his arrival at any place is called an "Istackball," literally opposition—meeting.

palace-gate, where business of importance was to be transacted. I felt a nameless alarm, an unaccountable concern and uneasiness, as I listened to this summons; but I failed not to attend at the appointed place and time. There every thing declared the bustle of preparation; but I knew not yet its object, and sought to learn it from a brother officer upon the ground. "What!" replied my comrade; "where can you have been that you are ignorant of the General's intention to examine this morning the rebels connected with the insurgents of Diroom, who have for some time past been confined in Mushed?" A thrill of horror seized me on hearing these tidings, but I strove to command myself, and asked my friend whether he knew the persons who were in jeopardy—"Oh," replied he, "there are some Koords, and some of the chief of Diroom's principal officers, I hear; but they speak also of some Tekeh Toorkomans, and a chief of consequence and great enterprize, whose name I have not heard." It was enough,—it must be Selim and his fellow prisoners who were thus speedily to be hurried before the General for judgment—and judgment in such a case, was it not the same as death itself?—Sick with dismay, I reeled against the wall for support,—"So soon! so dreadfully soon!" exclaimed I mentally. "But this is no time for weakness or despair; we must act, and that decisively." I passed onward, and entering

the palace-gate, soon found myself in the court before the hall of audience."

The court was already crowded; khans and officers of every rank, in gay suits of armour and gorgeous dresses, were mingled with the more sober garments of the Meerzas and Moollahs, the men of letters and of law, who were bidden to attend in order to render the ceremony more imposing. Guards, gholaums, executioners, and furoshes hurried about with busy looks, arranging every thing according to the orders that were issued by the Essek Aghassee, or director of the ceremonies. But the hall of audience itself was unoccupied; only a menial or two issued now and then from behind, and flitted across the apartment, as if to examine whether all was prepared.

"At length the arrangements were completed on a scale of pomp and solemnity more striking than I had almost ever witnessed. The attendants were more numerous than usual; the court was almost filled with lines of guards, gholaums, executioners, and other officers, all dressed in their garments of state and of office; and the blue gleaming from the naked swords of the fulfillers of the law, was sufficient to strike terror to the heart of the boldest delinquent. The drums then beat to arms; the troops without the wall of the palace fell into their ranks; and the music of the Nokara

Khaneh* burst forth in full swell, as Nader, preceded by the officers and servants of his household, entered the hall, and took his seat at the upper corner, with the stern but composed aspect of resolute justice. Every one bent low in salutation as he appeared; and then stood silent as death, with their hands crossed upon their breasts, awaiting the words of authority.

At a signal given by the Essek Aghassee, the Khans, chiefs, and officers, advanced to make obeisance to their General, who courteously returned their salute; and then making a sign for attention, he addressed them in these words.

'Khans and leaders of the armies of Iran; chiefs of the cities and the tribes of Khorasan; may the meeting of this day be fortunate!—I have called you together to witness an act of eternal justice. It is known to all of you how the Almighty and beneficent Creator of the Universe has blessed the arms of his servant with victory, and has deigned to make them the instruments of driving from the fertile plains of Persia, the Affghaun robbers, who had long plundered its villages, desolated its cities, and made the land a desert. The ryot now ploughs his field and reaps its produce

* The band of music which plays on occasions of state before a great man, and is usually stationed in an apartment over the gateway.

in peace; and the merchant once more fills the long bazaars of the capital with his rich goods, and supplies again the wants of a crowded population: for the farmer and the trader live secure under the shadow of an hereditary sovereign. The same blessings were bestowed upon Khorasan. Peace reigned throughout its extensive and numerous districts, and Mushed, the holy city, the refuge of saints, lifted up her head once more, rejoicing in her prosperity.

"But while our victorious troops were shedding their blood to expel the enemies of their country from their usurped acquisitions in the South, the spirit of evil moved certain chiefs and tribes of the North, ever prone to turbulence and revolt, to disturb the tranquillity of these happy regions, and to unite themselves with the Toorkoman robbers of the Desert, for the purpose of setting at defiance the royal power, and of promoting their own ambitious views, at the expense of the public prosperity. The Supreme Ruler of the Universe, however, has not seen fit to suffer such depravity to go unpunished. The governors of districts, and commanders of fortresses, received orders to march against the rebels, and they were scattered before the victorious troops of the state, like dust before the breath of the whirlwind. Some of these miscreants departed at once from the field of battle to hell; but others of their chiefs have

fallen into the hands of our officers, and are now in safe custody. It is fit that these should suffer, as an example to all evil-doers and breakers of the public tranquillity; and it is to witness this act of justice that I have summoned you hither this morning."

How earnestly did I drink in each word of this harangue; which, delivered in the full clear tones of Nader's voice, was distinctly audible at a far greater distance than that at which I stood. I watched its effect on those around me, many of whom had full often offended in the very point which now called down so stern a doom on others. But no symptom of conscious guilt—no shudder of disapprobation, was to be detected; an indistinct murmur of applause alone, arising timidly and constrainedly from the crowd, marked the deep awe in which they stood of the stern chief before them.

A bustle at the gate, rendered more audible by the profound silence that reigned in the assembly, now announced the approach of the prisoners, and drew every eye to the entrance of the court. It was a moment of deep interest to all, but how doubly so to me! My breath came thick, and a mist fell upon my eyes, which dimmed and confused every object. Even when vision returned, it was long ere I ventured to turn my gaze towards the spot where the captives stood.

It was a striking and a solemn sight, even to those who were well inured to scenes of blood. There stood more than twenty brave men, many of them chiefs of no mean fame, and all of them well practised in bold and gallant deeds, bound like the worst of malefactors, ready to be slaughtered like beasts of the field at the signal of a chief more fortunate than they, because they had ineffectually dared to oppose his ambitious, but prosperous career. The general indignation and horror, which prudence had at first suppressed, was now too strongly felt to be altogether concealed; for there was many a one in that assembly, who felt too much in unison with the prisoners, to be able to look with perfect composure upon the tragedy that was about to be performed, and the quiver of disgust, which slightly agitated their features, betrayed their secret sentiments. But what were their feelings to mine! Slowly and fearfully I raised my eyes to the group, who, with arms securely bound, and persons squalid, neglected, and emaciated by long confinement, stood closely guarded in the centre of the court.

I turned with comparative indifference from the foremost of the prisoners, for their apparel was that of the Koords, and I knew not those who wore it; but my heart beat quicker as my eye fell upon the Toorkoman dress, the well-known garb of the Tekehs. Wretched, it is true,

was the appearance of those who bore it; but it spoke powerfully to my heart, for it was the dress I had worn so long; and eagerly did I search each countenance for the features so deeply engraven on my memory. Suspense was soon at an end:—among the haggard and worn-out figures of the Toorkomans, there was one who, in spite of his tight-drawn bonds, his failing limbs, and wasted frame, preserved an erect and lofty bearing, which fixed the gaze of every eye. The sunken death-like cheek, the hollow eye, and the gaunt emaciated figure, added as they were to the years of toil and sorrow that had withered his youth, formed no disguise to me: Nature spoke in my heart, and I could not be deceived. It was Selim! the first glance was enough. But how can I describe the misery of that glance! The recollection of the gallant-spirited, joyous youth I once had known him, with all the blessed remembrances of our happy boyish days, and the dreadful wreck which, after such an absence, he now appeared, rushed upon my mind in fearful contrast, and quite deprived me of reason. Every thing but him was forgotten:—I flew to him, and, clasping him in my arms, fell on his neck and wept aloud. The buzz of amazement which this strange conduct gave rise to, was unheeded by me; I felt not the rough grasp of the soldiers who sought to tear their prisoner from my hold;

I heard not the orders of the officers, nor even the stern command of Nader, to separate and bring us both before him: I only saw—I only thought of Selim, and felt that he was in my arms.

It was some minutes before I recovered power to speak; passionate bursts of tears and convulsive sobs choked my voice; nor was Selim, in spite of his habitual self-command, less overcome than myself, when, after the first moment of astonishment, he comprehended who had thus embraced him. Even the soldiers and executioners who surrounded us, respected the bitterness of our emotion, and ceased for the moment to molest us. "Oh Selim!" said I at length, "that such should be our meeting after a parting like ours! But take courage, you shall not die!—the General must listen to my prayer—he honours me with the favour of his countenance; doubt it not, you will be safe."—"Ismael, dear friend! I thank the all-merciful Allah that he has given me the comfort of seeing you once more; but do not deceive yourself, there is no grace for me; my doom is sealed."—The commands of Nader, reiterated in thunder, could no longer be disregarded:—we were separated; but both were instantly hurried before our stern judge.

"What means this audacity?" demanded he in a terrible voice. "Ismael, can you be the madman who dares to interrupt the course of justice,

who presumes to insult your master by disturbing the solemnity of his tribunal? Say, what can such conduct mean?"

"May I be your sacrifice, my Lord," replied I, prostrating myself before him;—"I acknowledge my fault, my madness!—but my brain is troubled with distress! Grant, I beseech you, my Lord! one boon to your faithful servant, whose heart will break with sorrow if your Highness should refuse his prayer!—Grant to him the life of this young prisoner, his earliest companion, his first and dearest friend!"

"How!" cried the General with an ominous frown, "are you mad in good earnest? or have I not heard aright? Grant you the life of a condemned rebel, of a convicted traitor! Begone, young man! and be thankful that our indulgence overlooks your fault;—retire—leave the guilty to their fate."

"Oh! for the sake of the Prophet and of Allee!—by the holy name of Allah himself! my lord and my master, I entreat your forgiveness:—extend your bounty to your unhappy servant, and grant him the boon he humbly solicits!"

"Beware! young man, beware how you provoke our wrath;—be wise in time. The boon you seek cannot be granted.—What! a chief of rebels, whose bold pertinacity has worked more evil to this province and my cause, than all the rebellions

of the Koords, or the plundering incursions of the Oozbecks themselves! Get thee gone, youth! another word, and my favour is lost to thee: bethink thee how thou mayest endure my wrath!"

"It is impossible," exclaimed I; "my most noble master will never crush his slave for soliciting a boon like this. By all the favour your Highness has ever vouchsafed towards his slave—by all the devotion of that servant to your person and your cause—by the soul of your father—by the honour of your name! do not refuse me!"

"Fool! madman!" exclaimed Nader in a voice of thunder, "then take the consequences of thy folly: here, guards! here, Nujjuff Allee, lay hold of this traitor; he is no longer my servant!"

"No longer your servant, tyrant? thou sayest well," cried I, frantic with rage and disappointment; "I renounce your hollow favour, and your thankless service. It is thus you repay the blood that has been shed in your defence, and redeem the promises and pledges you have given.—But I abjure both you and them, and thus I fling away the tokens of my weak devotion! Let your executioners come forward, and let me die with my friend; my true friend, who failed me not in the hour of need, but perilled his own life to save mine." While uttering these words with the greatest vehemence of voice and action, I threw upon the ground my sword and shield, and tore

off my armour, with every distinguishing mark of the rank I bore: and running up to Selim, I exclaimed, "Now, my friend, now, my brother, we part no more! our fates are one!"

More than once had Selim attempted to interfere. "It is in vain, my friend," said he, "strive not with destiny.—My hour is come, and I would not wish to defer it.—Throw not vainly away your own life."—But I did not, would not hear him, but embracing him with a firm grasp, quietly awaited my fate.

The guards now approached to seize us; but at this moment the manner of Nader changed: his rage appeared to be suspended, and the frown which lowered on his brow, changed for a moment to an expression, which, but for the strange contrast it offered to that which had just left it, might have been taken for that of surprise not unmingled with admiration; but it passed away, and was succeeded by an air of stern composure. A signal of his hand stopped the rude discipline which the executioners were preparing to apply; and after speaking a few words to an officer beside him, he turned, and said to me, "Young man, you have forgotten yourself; but you shall find your master is not apt to do so.—Let these two prisoners be separately and strictly confined, until our farther pleasure be declared." This order was addressed to Nujjuff Allee Khan, and imme-

diately Selim and myself were taken from the court of audience. Once, as we were led through the narrow passages of the gateway, we found ourselves close together; but the time permitted only a few sentences: "Why have you been so rash, my dear friend?" said Selim; "you have ruined yourself, and have deprived poor Shireen of her only protector, without the smallest benefit to an unfortunate wretch, who, after all, would rather court than shun his fate."—"I could not have acted otherwise, my dear Selim. I cannot, and I will not serve such a tyrant any longer: the sooner such a game is terminated the better! But Shireen! for her indeed!—but no matter—God is great!—he will protect her—it is past: may God protect you, farewell!"—"Farewell, my friend, for ever!" Our guards hurried us asunder, and I soon found myself lodged in a small, and strongly guarded, though not uncomfortable chamber, where the door being securely barred, and a sentinel placed outside, I was left to my meditations.

It was long ere the tumult and high excitement of my mind subsided enough to allow me to consider the predicament into which I had fallen, with any degree of calmness. A fearful alteration had, indeed, taken place in my condition. That morning I had risen prosperous, happy, and respected; the favoured servant of a great chief, having affluence enough; restored

to the possession of a beloved mistress, and blessed with the fairest prospects for the future. In one hour the whole was changed:—friends, favour, fortune, mistress, all were torn from me, and I had become the tenant of a dungeon, from whence there was but little chance of emerging unless to death!

All this I had doubtless brought upon myself: but how far was the unfortunate result of my efforts, to be imputed to folly or to guilt? Of the latter, my conscience at once and fully acquitted me; and after a strict review of my conduct in the whole affair, I could discover little cause for censure, either on the score of imprudence or want of temper. I had watched in vain for an opportunity to break the dangerous subject to my master: untoward circumstances had rendered a private audience unattainable; and the suddenness with which the fate of the prisoners had been brought to issue, left me no other means of interference than those I had made use of. And could I have been less earnest in pleading the cause of my earliest friend?—and such a friend! Had he spared himself, or did he shrink from danger when my life was at stake? and was I to calculate the consequences of a resolute effort in his favour when he was placed in similar circumstances?—No:—the inward monitor declared uncompromisingly that I could have done no less.

In truth I had not waited to consult it: my heart alone had spoken, but my conscience and my judgment now approved the deed. "Come what may," said I, involuntarily rising to my feet, while a glow of self-approbation flushed my cheek—"I have performed my duty:—to have done less had been base, cowardly—more was not to be done." My mind wandered back to the time when once before I became the tenant of a dungeon:—how different were my feelings then! Remorse, guilt, bitter self-reproach, bowed me to the ground—I was sick of mispent life, yet dreaded death. Now, though life had every thing to make it sweet, I voluntarily relinquished the blessings it promised me, and embraced a violent death because my duty bade me make the gloomy choice—yet I was resigned, proud, happy!—

But sadder thoughts ere long rose in my soul—I remembered the friendless condition of Shireen; I thought of her devoted affection; and the conviction which I felt that she never would survive the double loss of her brother and her husband, was less painful to me than the fear of her living exposed to the injuries and insults of the world. For where can a helpless, unprotected woman be safe?—she is like the beasts of game, hunted by every heartless debauchee, until she is at last run down and lost. "And shall it be thus with thee, Shireen?" said I mentally;—"with thee

who should have been the cherished wife of Ismael? It must be provided against." But how? —The decision was replete with difficulty. After much consideration, two friends alone occurred to my mind—Meerza Aboo Talib of Ispahan would assuredly receive and protect the unfortunate mistress of his friend: but how to send her to a place so distant? It would require influence and friendly attention to secure her safety on the way; and to whom could I apply?—To Ibrahim Khan! —to the warm-hearted brother of the tyrant himself. His honest, generous nature would forget the fault of one whom once he loved, although his unrelenting brother could neither pardon nor appreciate the motive which led to it:—he would not, surely, deny the request of a dying friend. To him, then, I resolved to bequeath the charge of conveying the unfortunate Shireen to the care and protection of Aboo Talib.

When once I had come to this resolution, my mind grew more composed, and again I revolved every circumstance of the morning scene. But, after bestowing much consideration on all that had occurred, although there were some particulars for which I was puzzled to account, and which, in spite of my better judgment, would excite a faint ray of hope, I could discover nothing from which any inference could justly be drawn, of a complexion favourable to the fate of my friend or of

myself. The strictness of Nader in all matters of discipline was notorious; and there was no cause for surprise at the displeasure he had manifested at my unexpected and irregular interruption of his assembly of justice, nor at his increasing fury when I continued to press a suit which had met with his disapprobation from the first. But my sagacity was at fault to account for his remarkable change of expression when I braved that fury, defied his power, and renounced his service. I had frequently remarked, it was true, that a spirited and manly bearing had a powerful influence on Nader; and that a bold and fearless reply would often obtain the pardon of an offender, where the whining prayers of a coward would probably have sealed his doom; and an idea would faintly strike me, "Could the General have relented? Could my bold words have found favour with his stern and peculiar mind? Was it possible that his change of mood could betoken a change of feeling and of purpose?—But no—it could not be:—when I remembered the terms in which I had abjured his service, and identified my fate with that of an acknowledged rebel, in the presence of all his court, I felt that pardon was impossible. Besides, there was no pardoning me without extending his grace to my friend,—on no other terms was it possible for me to accept of it; and that I felt could never be. Selim was an avowed, a condemned rebel, so

at least was he termed by his only judge; and when was Nader ever known to pardon such a defaulter? My reason bade me reject the wild idea, and I strove to drive it from my thoughts, and to consider my doom as sealed: but, spite of all my efforts, a doubt, if not a hope, hung furtively about my mind, and would not be utterly excluded.

While striving thus, and not without success, to calm and regulate my mind, and to brace it up for future struggles, a thought unfortunately flashed across my brain, which overset all my equanimity, and filled me with dismay. It is a shocking but a very common custom, when an officer in high employment has unfortunately fallen into disgrace, and is imprisoned or put to death in consequence, to confiscate his effects for the uses of the crown, and to give his house to be pillaged by the executioners and furoshes who carry the decree into execution. In such cases the females of the family are generally subjected to the grossest abuse, even when this insult does not, as sometimes is the case, form part of the punishment. If this custom had been observed in my case, what must have been the fate of Shireen? This horrid idea quite overcame my fortitude; I pictured to myself the poor girl's despair at learning in so brutal a manner the occurrences which had deprived her of all her protectors: her frantic cries seemed to pierce my ears,

and I saw her struggling in the grasp of some ruffian, seeking to pollute her last moments with his savage violence. I could not endure the images created by my heated fancy, and became furious at the confinement which I had hitherto borne with patience. I threw myself on the ground and groaned aloud. Unable to bear the horrors of suspense, I sought to call the attention of my guards; and one of them at last entered to learn the cause of the outcry I was making. With much incoherence, I explained to him my fears, and entreated to know what had happened to those whom I had left in my house. "Oh, is that all!" replied the man; "depend upon it, your house, and all that it contains, is in very good hands. All there is safe enough." With this equivocal reply, in which my suspicious terror traced something of a sneer, he left me abruptly, as anxious and uneasy as ever.

But though the bitterness of my despair was unabated, I controlled the violent and useless expression of it until evening came, when the door of my prison opened, and a man entered, bearing food and drink for me. I did not fail to entreat his kind offices in procuring me information of my family; but he stopped me short—"I am commanded to assure you, Sir," said he, "that with regard to your family and property, you may rest in peace, for they are under the Gene-

ral's especial protection; whatever your fate may be, they will be respected. Thus much I am permitted to declare, but my orders go no farther. I know you well, Sir, and I esteem you. May God grant you a happy deliverance from your present misfortunes!" Placing his hand upon his breast, he bowed and withdrew, leaving me fresh matter for musing on.

My family under the General's protection!—*their* safety to be provided for at all events, and by *him!*—what could this mean? My doom then, was not yet fixed! it was strange! I was bewildered, perplexed,—but the communication, as probably was intended, comforted and relieved me. Perhaps that faint spark of hope, which never wholly dies in the human breast, was gently fanned by it, even though unknown to its master.

After all, the night passed heavily: doubt and anxiety are sorry companions in a dungeon, and the troubled slumber into which I sank near daybreak, was the effect of exhaustion alone. Morning came and brought no relief: and the weary day passed tediously away without incident—without a hint that might enable me to guess at my fate. Food was brought me in the morning and the evening, but those who brought it would neither speak themselves, nor reply to my enquiries. Another heavy night came on and passed away; but nature, worn out with anxiety and watching, at

length gave way, and I sank into a refreshing sleep, from which I was only roused by the noise of removing the fastenings of my prison-doors. I started up, but had scarcely gained my feet before a Nassekchee, in his dress of office, and bearing his drawn sword, entered the room, attended by two of the General's guards, and bade me prepare without delay to follow them to the palace.

The appearance of the Nassekchee appeared to be conclusive of my doom; and however faint or unadmitted were the hopes I had indulged, I will not attempt to deny that a cold shudder stole over me, as I looked upon this messenger of death: but pride and indignation came to my aid; I regained my composure in a moment, and told them I was ready to attend them.

A sash was slightly tied round my arms, but they would not bind them behind me, like those of criminals, although I held them for the purpose. "It is not necessary, Sir," said one of the guards, an old soldier of mine; "we know you too well—you will not attempt to escape." Holding the sash by one end, they walked on either side of me to the palace, preceded by the Nassekchee, whose presence sufficiently declared the nature of my situation; but there were few abroad in the streets at this hour, and we reached the palace without attracting much observation.

When the mind has been wound up to some

great and immediate effort of its powers, the least delay of the expected crisis becomes insupportable. At the gate of the palace we were informed that the General had not as yet made his public appearance for the morning; and that it was necessary we should wait until intimation should be sent of his being ready to reeeive us. Those who know the misery of awaiting the pleasure of a great man, even when their business is of trifling importance, may form some conception of the torturing impatience with which I, whose business involved not only my own fate, but the lives of others more dear to me than my own, sat counting the minutes for three mortal hours, until a furosh came to announce that his Highness desired our attendance in his khelwut. It may be thought, perhaps, that I had little cause to long for the interview; but I have ever sought to meet and grapple with inevitable danger rather than to defer the evil day. If, in truth, I were doomed to suffer death, where could be the good of prolonging the term of life by a few anxious moments?—better far to take the leap at once, than linger on the brink of the precipice. Besides, the whole business wore an air of mystery which had strongly excited my curiosity; and I burned to unravel its meaning, even if death itself were to prove the solution of the enigma.

Nader was seated at a window in a corner of

his private apartment, which opened on a small court. Nujjuff Allee Khan, the commander of his guards, and one or two other officers, stood at a little distance within the room. Two Gholaums on duty, a Nassekchee, and two or three furoshes, waited below on either side the window in the court, to which we were now admitted.

My conductors, after bowing profoundly, awaited the signal of Nader to approach; and on this being given, they led me forward, in front of the window at which he was seated, and within a few yards of his person. I cast my eyes over his countenance, but nothing could be read there:—it was grave, composed, and impenetrable.

The General, on his side, seemed also desirous to feel his ground; for he bent a long and searching look upon my face, as if he would have read my inmost thoughts. But, unconscious of having given any just cause for all this severity, I supported this trying scrutiny, and neither quailed beneath it, nor returned it with unbecoming audacity; but after meeting his eye for some moments, I bent my own respectfully but without confusion on the ground.

"You have been sent for, young man," said he at last, "that I may learn whether you have yet regained your senses; and whether you at length comprehend and tremble at the dangerous predicament into which your wild and rebellious con-

duct has plunged you? Do you acknowledge the clemency, which, as yet sparing your rash folly, permits you still to draw the breath of life?"

"The life of your slave rests in your Highness's hands," replied I, in a firm but respectful voice:—"if, in an unguarded moment, he has been guilty of irreverent demeanour towards his lord, he laments his error, and would humbly sue for pardon. But rebellious sentiments, or intentional disrespect, he utterly disclaims; and he would humbly represent that his conduct hitherto affords the best proof of his loyalty."

"How, slave! Did you not brave my displeasure in the face of the whole court?—did you not avow yourself the sworn friend of an approved rebel?—and did you not publicly renounce my service, and solemnly devote yourself to your rebel friend? Is not this treason? is not this rebellion?"

"How should a slave contradict his lord? The words of your Highness flow from the fountain of truth; and the life of your servant is as the dust beneath your feet: let your Highness so dispose of it! What can I say?—despair and suffering are bad counsellors; but it is said that the Cazee should take no note of abuse from the wretch whose feet are in the fellick* by his orders.

* The beam and noose by which the feet of criminals are secured when receiving the bastinado.

The commands of your Highness had inflicted worse agony on your servant than that of the bastinado;—his heart was dissolved like water, and his brain was burning: how could he choose his words? But they are past: he is guilty, and merits death. Let the orders of your Highness go forth: your slave asks not for life."

"Hoh! still rebellious, I see—still devoted to your rebel friend—still preferring his service to mine. This is your gratitude for past favours! this your devotion and loyalty to your master! But he is a tyrant; a slighter of his faithful servants; and you, forsooth, will rather die than serve him, Mash-allah!—By the head of my father! were you once at liberty, we should have you flourishing the sword you have received from us in our own face, at the next rebellion of your Toorkoman friends!"

"My Lord, it is written, 'Let not a servant reply to his master in many words!' Your slave did hope that your Highness, who has long witnessed the conduct of your servant, would sooner or later do justice to his memory. But his heart is full. The words of your Highness are bitter, and force him to speak out. If gratitude can be shown by deeds, my Lord, your Highness may declare whether the miserable Ismael has ever been deficient in that respect. Has he ever been found absent from his post, where duty was to do? Did

he ever hang back in the day of need? or in the hour of battle did he ever spare his labour or his blood? The favour bestowed by your Highness on his unworthiness has already testified the opinion you entertained of him; and he needs not again recall to your Highness's recollection, the promises, the assurances, vouchsafed to your servant, that whatever petition he might prefer should be granted. Presuming, perhaps, too boldly on these assurances, he dared to solicit a boon—the life of a single prisoner—of his earliest and most beloved friend! Your Highness thought fit to reject this petition; though your unfortunate servant, in declaring the cause of his earnestness, declared also that his honour was pledged, and his heart so deeply interested in its success, that he could not support a refusal, and had vowed to share the fate of his friend!—Your slave would humbly submit it to your Highness, if this be the way in which faithful servants should look to have their claims acknowledged?"

"But what business should my servants have to crave the life of an inveterate and condemned rebel? What have I to do with their private feelings or old attachments? The peace and safety of the country require that such criminals shall suffer death: how then can I release them at the prayer of any one whomsoever?"

"My Lord, since the day I entered the service of your Highness, your enemies have been mine, and I have shed my blood to defend you from them! How should it be possible, then, that a compliance with any petition your servant may prefer, should endanger the safety of the state, or the interests of my master!

"Well, well! let that pass. Now mark me, youth:—Suppose this rebel Toorkoman were yet alive, should you be content to leave him to the fate he has merited, to solicit my forgiveness, and return to my service? Agree to this, and all that has passed shall be forgotten; your honours and dignities shall be restored, and a fairer course than ever shall be opened for your pursuit."

The terrible inference to be gathered from these words, that the execution of my friend had already taken place, struck me with consternation:—"He is dead, then!" exclaimed I, "and his noble spirit is gone for ever! What, then, have I to do with life! Give up my friend, saidst thou?—Couldst thou restore the life that thou hast taken, and offer provinces and kingdoms as the price of forsaking him; and were instant death, or a life of increasing misery before me, as the penalty of keeping faith with him, I would cling to him until that death should overtake me. Hear me, Khan! His father snatched me, yet an infant, from among the ruins of my house; the son was my earliest pro-

tector and my friend. We passed the years of boyhood together, and though I was but a slave, he held me dear as a brother. Thus did we live on, increasing in affection as in years; our games, our exercises were the same, and when we fought together for the first time, each thought more of shielding the other than himself, from the blows of the enemy. He saved my life when the clouds of danger darkened over it, and there was no other to help me;—he did so at the peril of his own: but, more than that, he forgave me the bitter wrong which I had inconsiderately done to him. He saw that my heart was almost broken, and my spirit wounded, and he soothed it at the expense of his own:—others would have washed away their injuries in my blood, but he requited them with benefits on my head. I swore never to forget his generous devotion, but to return it once and for ever with equal sincerity and zeal. This oath will I keep, though torments and death be the consequence! I would have served you, Khan! to the last drop of my blood and the latest breath of my nostrils: but that is past,—I can hold no intercourse with the slayers of my friend. Call your executioners,—the cord or the sword are equal to me. I seek but to join him in death whose life I would have preserved at the sacrifice of my own!"

"And you shall preserve it, youth! you shall preserve it. You have fought a gallant fight, and

fairly won the prize. Nay, do not look so wildly, man—he lives, and shall do so!—you have Nader's word for it, and that shall not fail you. We did but try your constancy, young man; and you have nobly stood the trial. You spoke the truth, you had our promise of a boon without reserve, and to receive it was your due; but, by the head of the Khan! we never dreamed it should have been a boon like this; nor, to say truth, would it have been well to make an easy grant of it. You had a good cause, and fought hard for it, but it was a dangerous game, and let me counsel you, young man, to play at it no more. To chafe the lion whose paw may crush you, is idle as well as perilous—others may forget themselves as well as you, and wrath may do what reason will in vain regret.

"And now we dismiss you for the present:—Go to your friend, be the bearer of good tidings: tell him he is free, and that Nader desires to inlist on his side those talents and that courage which till now have been so boldly ranged against him: make your own terms, but secure him as my servant—Go—and good fortune attend you."

I attempt not to paint my amazement at this most unlooked-for turn of affairs. But the rapid change of my countenance, from the flush and agitation of high-wrought feelings to the wild and doubtful stare of astonishment, must have afforded no small amusement to the by-standers. As the

words of Nader removed the veil from my eyes, and discovered the means which had been used to check my unwise and needless impetuosity, affection and gratitude, revived in my breast, and deprived me of all utterance. I could only prostrate myself on the ground before my indulgent master, and kiss the hand he held forth to me; and covering my face with my cloak, I concealed as best I could the flood of tears that burst from the fulness of my heart. The look of benevolent kindness which he cast on me as I quitted the court, would alone have rewarded me for half my sufferings.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

Joy, like despair, has extremes which admit not of description. Language cannot tell the raptures of lovers who are united after years of absence and suffering;—the delight of a parent who recovers a lost child;—the full, the generous happiness of true friends, restored to each other after many toils and dangers:—nor can I attempt to describe the thrilling sensations with which I flew to the prison, and rushing into the arms of my friend, now no longer denied to me, announced the happy tidings of liberty and pardon.

The mind of Selim, better schooled in misfortune, received this unexpected intelligence with a calmness that astonished, and almost hurt me.—"Be not surprised, my dear friend," said he in reply to my remonstrance at his strange indifference, "that the boon of prolonged existence is received by me as one of questionable value:

life holds out very different prospects to me and to you:—honour, happiness and fame, smile upon your path, and well are you fitted to enjoy these blessings; my steps must wander through a dark and desolate track, already stripped of all that once made it sweet to my eyes. Besides, the traveller who is equipped for an inevitable journey, loves not to be delayed, even for a season. My soul, Ismael, was prepared to meet the destroying angel, and though a soldier should at all times be found ready for that encounter, it never could have happened to me at a fitter time.—But come, it were ungrateful to cloud your joy, or to receive your well-meant and devoted efforts with indifference; let us go to my sister and relieve her mind of the pain she must of late have suffered. But let us be wary; it is right she should be prepared for so unlooked-for an interview."

Shireen had never been made aware of the extreme peril in which her brother stood. When at any time I spoke of interfering in his favour, I industriously strove to banish from her mind all doubt as to the issue: and though it was not possible to succeed in this entirely, hope still predominated greatly over fear. Neither had she been needlessly terrified by the alarming tidings of my arrest:—for a Furosh of Nader's household was sent to my house to declare that I had been dispatched on business of the General's, and

might not return for many days. Rumours of some of the occurrences at the palace had indeed reached her, and she had suffered some uneasiness from vague accounts of intended executions; but the precautions taken, had been effectual to a great extent, and she was spared the wretchedness of knowing that the exterminating sword was suspended by so slight a thread over the heads of her only two earthly protectors.

When, therefore, I stood before her upon my return home, she only believed I had arrived from distant duty, and welcomed me accordingly. It was when I sought to prepare her for the meeting with her brother—for the painful change she must observe in his appearance—for finding him so haggard and prison-worn; it was then that my tongue faltered, and her ready apprehension was awakened. " What of him, Ismael?" cried she, gasping for breath, " speak! speak out at once—oh, keep me not in misery!—He is dead, I am sure of it! —Oh, God! they have murdered him!" This needless alarm, the result of my own mismanagement, confounded me so much, that too much agitated to repair my error, I could only exclaim, " He is not dead! Shireen—look up, he is here!" and putting back the curtain, behind which her brother was concealed, I drew him forward. She uttered a piercing scream, and darting towards him, sank senseless in his arms!

But human happiness is ever chequered—it is only the joys of Paradise that know no shade of sorrow. It was not until some days were past, and the first emotions of delight at Selim's safety were somewhat sobered, that I recollected the orders of the General to enlist him in his service, the compliance with which condition might in some degree be considered as the terms of his pardon. The recollection of this commission, however, only increased my pleasure, for not a doubt ever entered my mind that Selim, ruined as he was in family and prospects, would eagerly close with an offer, which would afford him employment of the kind he best loved, and the society of the few beings upon earth in whom he now could feel an interest.

But my ardour was checked by the grave look of dissent which clouded his countenance when I unfolded to him the General's desire. "No! no!" said he, shaking his head, "Ismael, that may not be—I cannot be the servant of your General.—Alone as I stand in the world—bereaved of friends, of family and tribe, I cannot forget that I have been a Toorkoman chief—and such, free and unshackled will I remain while life endures.—I cannot forget that Nader Koolee has the blood of our race upon his hands and that its last exterminating blow was dealt by him;—how could I serve its destroyer? If such are the terms of liberty and life, take me back to my prison:—let the sword

be bared once more; my eyelids will not tremble at the dazzle of its blade.

"But I would not have my friend deem me cold or ungrateful for all his zealous efforts in my favour—I would respect too the feelings of my sister; severed though we may be in future, my affection for her can never diminish—for her sake, for yours, I am content to make some sacrifice of pride and feeling—I consent to live, but it must be unfettered. I never will serve Nader, but I will no longer molest him. It is vain to strive against destiny, and it was written that the Tekehs should be humbled, and the Kuzzilbashes triumph—that the house of my fathers should be desolate, while that of Keerkloo should flourish. Nader is but an instrument in the hands of the Almighty; and how should I oppose his omnipotent arm, so plainly revealed?—No, I will strive with your chief no longer, and I promise solemnly never more to trouble the province of Khorasan, never to interfere with his authority in these countries. But as my life has been devoted to my tribe and to my house, my last efforts shall still be for them. I will seek to gather the scattered remnant, to revive their prosperity and regain our lost name in more distant regions. Who can tell what is written in the book of fate? But if the wanton ambition of your chief should pursue us thither, my compact ceases, my forbearance is at

an end: should Nader Koolee again by force or guile attempt to check or crush our rising fortunes, I will oppose him were he to come with all Persia in his train to work his unholy purposes. Such is my decision, and such declare it to your General; take your own way to tell him it, but let the terms be such as may not be mistaken."

This resolution of Selim's gave much distress to his sister and myself; nor was it alone the pain of parting with him, probably for ever, that rendered me uneasy. I thought of the anger and disappointment of Nader, and dreaded the consequences of refusing the proposals of that rigid chief, whose intention it certainly was, not only to disarm a powerful enemy, but to confer an acceptable mark of kindness upon me in the person of my friend. Could he even be prevailed upon to overlook the obstinacy of his uncompromising captive, the pain of seeing the well-meant kindness of my master rejected, was to me inexpressibly severe.

But there was no remedy; I could not venture on chafing the galled pride of Selim by farther remonstrance, or rousing his indignation to a more unmanageable pitch, by hinting, still more plainly, how much his life might depend upon his acquiescence in the conqueror's terms. Perilous as it was, I preferred trusting to the generosity and favour of my master; and accordingly, without farther loss of time, I solicited a private audience, and ex-

plained, not without considerable embarrassment and hesitation, the views and determination of my friend. With no small anxiety I watched the first quick glance of surprise vanish in the deepening gloom of Nader's peculiar frown: but I knew that to tremble beneath that frown was only to increase its terrors; and I waited with all the external appearance of patience, until it should please him to give utterance to his thoughts or his decision, in words.

"Do you mean to declare," said he, after an ominous pause, "that your Toorkoman friend rejects our gracious offers?—Can it be that he refuses to enter my service?—Know you not—can he be ignorant, that my duty forbids me to release an enemy of the state? We waive the insolence of his refusal; but how could we, the guardian of the country, be held excused, were we to dismiss one of its bitterest enemies, again to lift the sword against it? Hah! answer me!—"

"My Lord, the determination of my friend has deeply grieved me. Were it on my own account alone, I should grieve that he declines the noble offers of your Highness, and that we cannot stand together in the day of battle against your foes; but still more on his own account do I lament that the feelings and opinions he indulges should disqualify him from entering the service of your Highness. But Selim, my Lord, will never more be the

enemy of the state: he will seek his fortune in a distant country, and never again oppose your Highness, nor disturb the tranquillity of the country: to this he pledges himself, and with my head am I willing to guarantee the pledge. However I may regret or dissent from his opinions, I can testify to the high sense he entertains of your Highness's generosity, and to his resolution that, whatever may be his future destiny, it will be his pride to prove himself not unworthy of it. But his life and liberty are again at your Highness's disposal; and never, surely never, will the boon, already so nobly granted, be withheld, because a point of honour and of duty, be it false or true, has forced its object to decline a portion of the proffered grace."

A long pause ensued; and I watched with intense interest the gradual disappearance of the gloom which clouded the face of Nader. "Ismael," said he at last, "the pardon which has passed my lips I were loth to recall, especially when the boon has been granted to a worthy servant. For your friend's rejection of our proffered employment, although we deem his conduct to savour more of rashness than of wisdom, we shall not press its acceptance any further. By the head of Allee! we are not so much at a loss for servants, as to thrust our favour on unwilling hearts. The pledge, however, which you offer for his future conduct to-

wards the state and to ourselves is sufficient: nor do we deem that you run any risk in thus empawning it; for the man who resists his enemy bravely and openly to the last, and who disdains to purchase pardon by an easy falsehood, will never forfeit his promise, even when given to a foe. Your friend is therefore safe; life and liberty are his, on the conditions he himself has named; but we would see the youth, and speak with him. Go therefore, and bring him before us."

With a lighter step than that with which I entered, I quitted the presence, and flew to my friend. But, in spite of the favourable disposition in which I had left the General, I dreaded the interview he had desired; for I knew that a single unlucky turn of expression, the merest trifle in itself, might be sufficient to alarm the pride and inflame the passions of two such haughty and uncompromising characters. I sought therefore by all means to soothe the mind of Selim, and to lead him to conduct himself towards Nader as to a worthy and generous, though successful foe, beseeching him to consider the misery he would inflict upon his sister and myself, were he needlessly to rouse the chief's displeasure. He bade me be at ease, for such was far from his intention; that I might rely upon his prudence:—and thus assured, we proceeded to the presence of the General.

It was a striking and an interesting sight to see the dignified yet modest bearing of the young Desert warrior, as he stood in the presence of his conqueror. His countenance, still pale and emaciated from the hardships of confinement, was calm as his own noble mind; and ere he cast his dark expressive eye upon the ground, he fixed it for a while in steady yet unassuming gaze upon the face of the chief.

The countenance of Nader was grave and composed as his own, but there was no sternness in its expression; and though his eye was bent with searching keenness on his captive, it bore neither anger nor threatening in its glance. It seemed as if these two noble minds had comprehended each other in that first glance; and the anxiety I felt was instantly relieved.

"Young chief," said Nader after a while, "they tell me that thou dost reject the fair offers which thy friend was authorized to make thee on my part, and refusest to enter my service. I would learn thy reasons for this conduct, and know why thou dost reject the tender of that favour which many a more prosperous chief might vainly struggle to obtain."

"My Lord," replied Selim with collected firmness, "I should be loth to awaken thy displeasure, or to reject with sullen thanklessness the proffer which was meant in kindness; yet thy ser-

vant must answer in the words of truth—I should ill repay thy generous confidence by treachery or deceit. Long have thy race been the enemies of mine—the blood of the Affshars has often dyed the Tekeh lances; and the race of my fathers have fallen—yea, fallen to a man, under the swords of thy people. In the wide Deserts where my fathers ranged, there breathes not one being with whom I can claim kindred!—their blood, my Lord, was shed by your commands. Doubtless it was the fate of war, but I cannot league with those who slew my kindred—I cannot serve their chief:—nay, Khan, I will say farther—but for one powerful reason, the terms cannot be named that would induce me to accept the life, the pardon, which I needs must say thou hast most generously granted. Thyself art now the leader of a brave and powerful tribe, and the tongues of men, as well as thy own deeds, declare thee to have the feelings of a chief—wouldst thou consent to sheathe thy sword, and swear never to draw it against thy hereditary foe? I know thou wouldst not: nor canst thou blame thy captive for feeling as thou couldst have done, had the fortune of war placed thee in his condition. But the hand of the Almighty too clearly points to thee as to its minister, and I dare no longer oppose his will; nor can I endure to break the only hearts which beat for me—the only ties which still bind me to life. I therefore am

contented to preserve my life upon the terms which my friend, no doubt, has stated; and here I renew the pledge, declaring that wheresoever my fate may henceforth carry me, I will not come in arms against thee, Khan! nor join thy enemies against thy power here in Khorasan. Thou hast desired to know the reasons why I cannot serve thee;—in all candour and honesty have I thus declared them, and now I await thy farther commands."

"Thou hast answered well, young chief," said Nader; "thy bearing is bold, as becomes a soldier, nor do I blame the spirit which cannot bend to ally itself with an hereditary foe, with whom it has a feud of blood. Willingly would I have ranked thee among my officers of trust; but as that cannot be, without abandoning thy worthiest feelings, it were shameful to urge thee, and pity if thou couldst be swayed to consent. The coat of mail is valuable, only as it resists alike the keen thrust or the stern blow; and thy worth were greatly less, if force or favour could win their way against thy honest feelings and thy conscience. We dismiss thee, therefore, free. Come no more as a foe to Khorasan; trouble not its borders by force or by faction. If Allah wills that we should meet beyond them, there will be a fair field for us, and let him win it whom Heaven favours. Meantime, thou shalt not depart without proofs that I

love thy gallant spirit: for that, and for Ismael's sake, thou shalt receive an honest gift from a fair and honourable foe:—nay, no refusal!—this binds thee to nought. Even between Roostum and Isfundear,* they say that gifts were interchanged. For the present, rest thee with thy friend; recover thy strength and health; and when thou leavest us for thy Deserts, may Allah be thy guide!—tell to the thousand tribes of Tooraun,† that Nader Koolee, though he be stern and severe, can likewise be generous and just."

It was but a day or two after this event, that returning from a visit to the family of the poor Jew, Abisham, I chanced to take the shortest way homeward, which led through an ancient burying-ground, among the graves of which are many mausoleums of saints long dead, now often the haunt of pilgrims and religious wanderers. Passing close by one of these, I observed a tall figure standing alone in the mouldering porch; nor did the failing light of a rich summer evening prevent me from discovering at once, the commanding form of the Dervish, Sheikh Allee Calunder.

A recollection of the painful occasions upon which this mysterious personage had hitherto ma-

* Two heroes of the fabulous history of Persia, whose single combat forms a fine episode in the heroic poem of Ferdoosee.

† Tartary. Iraun and Tooraun were in former times the names given to the empires of Persia and of Tartary.

nifested his presence, together with the solemnity of the hour and of the scene, combined to excite in me a sense of awe which betrayed itself in a sudden start. But this time my conscience was free from guilt, and instantly recovering myself, I stood to receive his commands.

"Fear not, young man," said he with mild solemnity; "thou hast no cause to tremble,—leave terror to the guilty. Thrice has thy conduct summoned me to expose thy errors, or to snatch thee from the brink of that gulf to which thy crimes had hurried thee;—my errand now is of more gracious character. Reproach and stern denunciations of evil may fail to turn the profligate from their sinful course; but the frailty of human nature requires the encouragement of commendation and praise, to retain in the thorny path of virtue, those who once have entered it. Hitherto my task has been to speak to thee in warnings or reproof; but now thy conduct merits another tone; thou hast acted an upright and an honest part, thou hast obeyed the dictates of thy better feelings, the impulse of thy nobler nature, in circumstances of peril and of difficulty:—the inward monitor approves, and willingly do I confirm its award. Proceed in thy present course: be honest, generous, noble, firm; support the weak, oppose the oppressor; so shall thy soul know the peace of the just, thy cup shall be

sweetened by the blessings of the afflicted, and thy rest shall be unbroken with sorrow;—thy years shall be full of honour, and thy house shall flourish.

"But let not thy present happiness cause thee to neglect thy duty—the blessings of Providence are sent to cheer, not to intoxicate the heart of man. A noble destiny awaits thee—thwart not the influence of thy star by folly or by sloth, but hearken to the call of honour and of duty, which soon will summon thee from thy present life of ease to one of toil and of exertion. And now, my son, farewell!—forget not the gracious warnings, the precious lessons of wisdom, which Allah in his mercy hath vouchsafed to thee; let thy prayers duly arise to him for strength and support, and mayest thou live for ever under the shadow of his omnipotent arm!"

"Stay! mysterious being," exclaimed I, as he turned to quit me,—"leave me not unsatisfied—tell me who and what thou art? Say, whence is that influence of thine, which acts like a spell upon me, and sways me at thy will? Tell me, shall we meet again? Would that I knew how to seek thee in the hour of trouble!—would that thy warning voice could ever be at hand to snatch me from error, and confirm my steps in the path of virtue!"

"Forbear, my son!—no more!—the unhallowed

wish to read the dark page of futurity hath already cost thy house full dear—who and what I am concerns not thee to know; seek not to discover what may be concealed from thee in mercy! Whether we may ever meet again, is known but to *One* whose humble messenger I am; and of this be sure, that any effort on thy part to hasten such a meeting could end but in disappointment and misery. Be strong then, my son, in virtuous resolutions—strive to do well, and trust for support in the might of the Most High, who can breathe into the weakest of his creatures a strength that can baffle the most powerful of the spirits of evil. Seek to detain me no longer—Once more, may Heaven protect thee!" As he uttered these words, he glided from me, and his form was lost in the deepening obscurity of the night.

At length the time arrived when Selim must depart. He had tarried until he saw me united to his sister by the strictest bonds of our law; but the ruddiness of returning health had scarce revisited his pale cheek, ere the thought of his high duties roused him to action, and he prepared to bid us farewell. Rejecting the gifts I fain would have heaped on him, he only would accept of that which once had been his parting gift to me—a warrior's outfit; and I took care that it should be complete.

"Oh yet, my brother, go not from us!" ex-

claimed Shireen, wringing her hands in bitter grief, as, all equipped for his journey, he stood before us for the last time; "Bethink you, that you have no object to love—none to love you when you go to the desolate plains where our tents once stood and our flocks pastured. All is silent there! Think that you leave behind you all that in this wide world you have to care for—the only beings on earth whose blood is of the same stream as yours, and who would spill it all to serve you. Do not go from us then, my brother! let us be one family, as once we were, and we may yet see many happy days!"

A pang of feeling for a moment convulsed the calm and noble countenance of her brother: his cheek was flushed with a glow of deep emotion; but it quickly passed away, and all was pale, sad, and tranquil as before. "No! my dear sister—no! it cannot be. I was born a Desert bird, and such must I die; I am choked with the pent-up air of your cities; the conventional arrangements and the artificial restraints of civilized life are intolerable to me. I must be free—I require the interminable Desert to breathe in, and a range to wander over, bounded only by my own will. No! the gourkhur of the Desert cannot be tamed—the antelope endures not confinement—if you clip the falcon's wings, he pines and dies. No, my dear sister! your Ismael's temper,

kindly, warm, and social, yet noble, generous, and ardent, is fitted for intercourse with those who dwell in cities; there he is in his own sphere; he will be loved and respected among such men, and with them should he remain. But I, wild, ungovernable, enthusiastic and ambitious, must not wander from mine. Our kindred are gone, my sister! already does the rank herbage cover their bones; the ashes of their habitations have been scattered to the four winds of heaven. Of our tribe but a few remain, the scattered pearls of a broken chaplet; but they do not the less demand the protection of their chief. It shall be my care to reunite them; with them will I range the Deserts where my fathers dwelt. I will once more establish the fortune of my tribe, and exalt the name of Tekeh; or the last of my race shall find a nameless grave in its wide and barren bosom. Farewell, dearest sister! Ismael, my friend, my brother, once more, farewell!—if we meet not again on earth, we shall in Paradise. May your path be ever prosperous, and may the arm of the Almighty be your protection!"—He rushed from us, and in a moment was lost to our view.

Courteous reader! our tale has reached a point where adventures usually terminate: our hero, possessed of competence and rank, as well as of his long-lost mistress, might, with us, have had a fair

prospect of ease and happiness for the rest of his days. But it is otherwise in Asia. Marriage, in countries where women are held as a secondary class of beings, and where a plurality of wives is admitted of by law, becomes an event too common and unimportant to affect materially the pursuits of life; and, in point of fact, it is one which occurs, once at the least, to most young men before the period when the business of life is commenced in earnest.

In the present case, however, it chances to form a stage, a resting-place, in the journey of our hero's life, where we can conveniently take leave of him for a season. Should this portion of our Kuzzilbash's adventures be fortunate enough to find favour with a liberal public, the labours of the translator may be renewed, and some farther passages of his life, and that of his celebrated master, may be offered to their notice. In the mean time, he humbly takes his leave in the phrase of that hero's country—"Muhubut shumah cum na shewed!"—"Khodah hafiz shumah!"*

* "May your favour to your servant never diminish!"—"May God protect you"—or "have you in his remembrance!"

THE END.

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